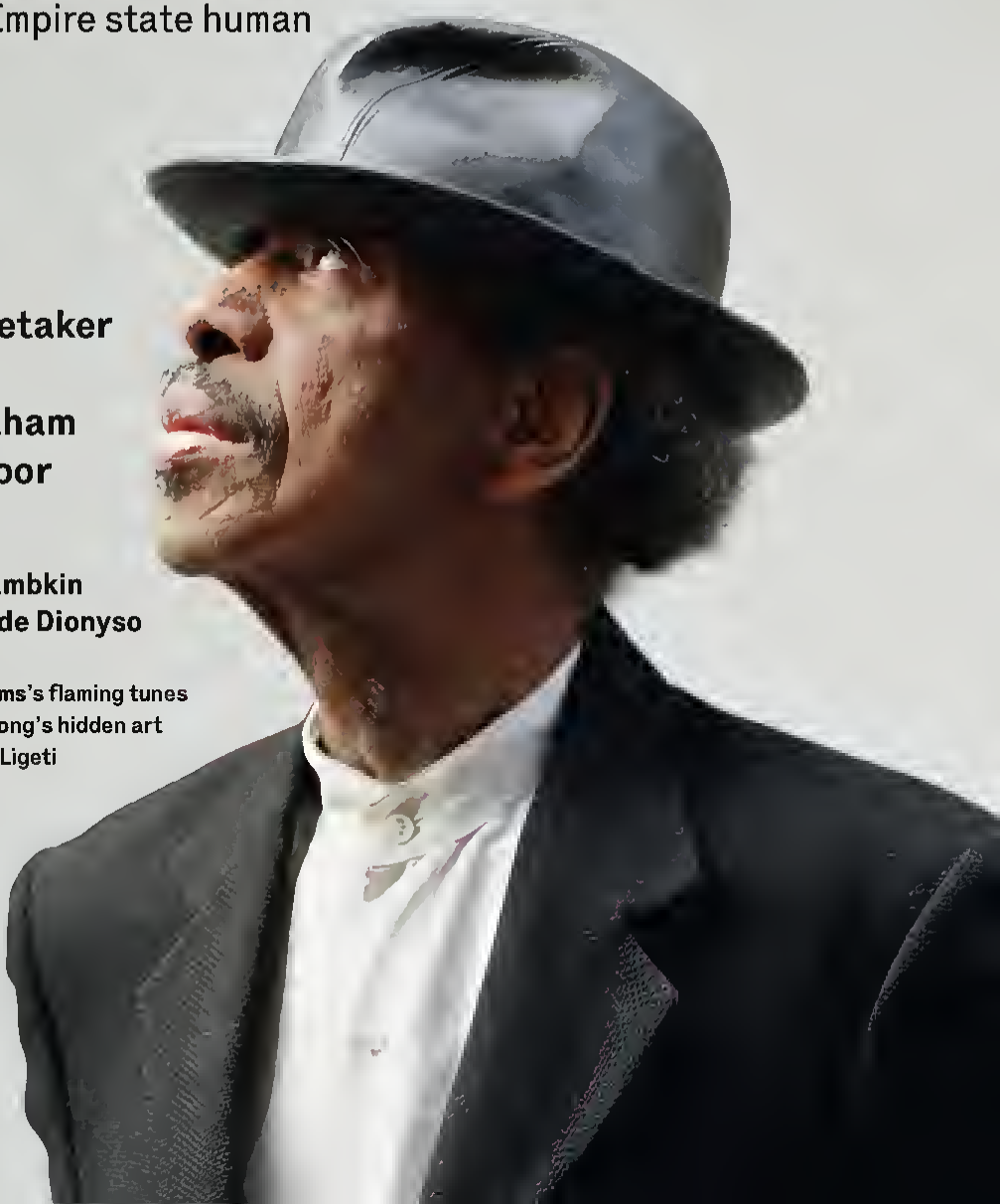
THE WIRE 304 | JUNE 2009

WIRE

Ornette Coleman

Empire state human



The Caretaker
Comus
Dan Graham
Andy Moor

Bora Yoon
Graham Lambkin
Arrington de Dionyso

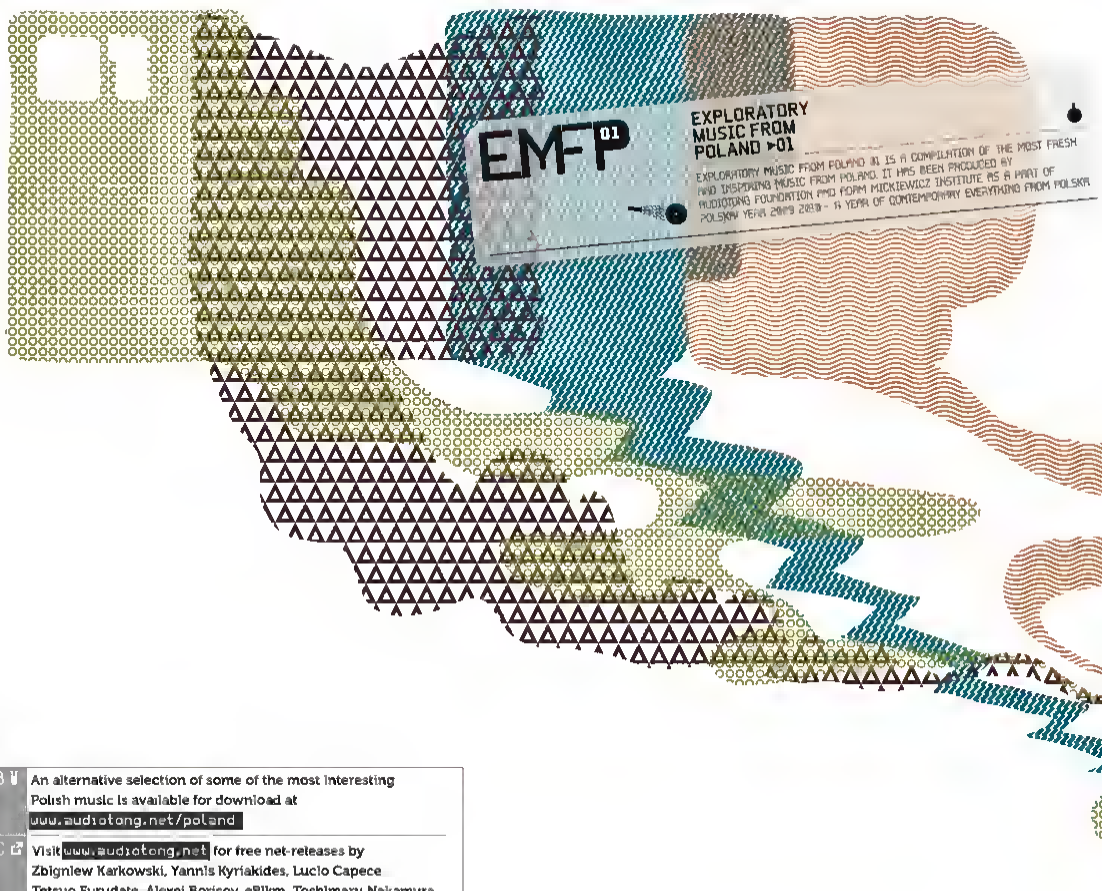
Gareth Williams's flaming tunes
Louis Armstrong's hidden art
Erik Davis on Ligeti

THE WIRE 304 | JUNE 2009
Adventures In Modern Music
£3.90 | 9 770952 068063 06

THE WIRE 304 | JUNE 2009 | Ornette Coleman | The Caretaker | Comus | Dan Graham | Andy Moor

The EXPLORATORY MUSIC FROM POLAND 01 CD compilation is given away to the subscribers of The WIRE with this month's issue

WIRE


EMFP 01
EXPLORATORY MUSIC FROM POLAND ▸01
EXPLORATORY MUSIC FROM POLAND 01 IS A COMPILATION OF THE MOST FRESH AND INSPIRING MUSIC FROM POLAND. IT HAS BEEN PRODUCED BY AUDIOTONG FOUNDATION AND FORM MICKIEWICZ INSTITUTE AS A PART OF POLSKA! YEAR 2009-2010 - A YEAR OF CONTEMPORARY EVERYTHING FROM POLSKA

B An alternative selection of some of the most interesting Polish music is available for download at www.audiotong.net/poland

C Visit www.audiotong.net for free net-releases by Zbigniew Karkowski, Yannis Kyriakides, Lucio Capece Tetsuo Furudate Alexei Borisov, eRikm Toshimaru Nakamura and many more

D Visit www.polskayear.pl for the full programme of Polska! Year 2009-2010 – a year of contemporary everything from Polska.

AUDIO TONG www.audiotong.net

POLSKA! YEAR

Inside

The Wire 304 | June 2009

Ornette Coleman photographed by Mark Mahaney

The Masthead 4

Letters 6

Bitstream 8
News and more from below the radar

Trip Or Squeek 9
Cartoon strip by **Savage Pencil**

Bites 10
Cut & Splice Festival's Living Room series, **Gareth Williams & Mary Currie**, **Louis Armstrong**'s artworks, the **Avant Garde Project**

Charts 48

Out There 96
Festivals, concerts, gigs and club listings

Back Issues 100

Subscriptions 101

Reviews Index 49

Soundcheck 50
This month's selected CDs, vinyl and downloads, including **Lou Reed's Metal Machine Trio**, **Tortoise** and **Robert Hood**. Plus avant rock, critical beats, dub, electronica, hiphop, jazz & improv, modern composition, outer limits, unusual formats and reissues

The Inner Sleeve 75
Alex Neilson on Bob Dylan's *Planet Waves*

Print Run 76
New music books on **Heavy Metal and punk**, the **French music underground**, **Elder Utah Smith** and more

On Screen 78
High Rise, **Wilco** and **Henri Pousseur** plus documentaries on **dub** and **reggae sound systems** on DVD

On Site 80
Gallery and mixed media events, including **Sound By Artists** and **Sara Velas**

On Location 81
Concert and festival reviews including **Doneufestival** and **Ether**, plus **Merce Cunningham**, **Aaron Dilloway + Nate Young**, **PJ Harvey & John Parish** and more

Bora Yoon 12
Robots and treated objects extend the Korean-American's vocal acrobatics. By **Kurt Gottschalk**

Arrington de Dionyso 14
The free folk visionary throws overtone singing, Fire Music and dance into the pot. By **Daniel Spicer**

Graham Lambkin 16
Nick Cain meets the former Shadow Ring member who's using his home as a sound palette

Global Ear

Sana'a 18
Robert Carroll discovers qat power is the biggest influence on Yemen's ageless desert music

Cross Platform

Equinox Festival 20
Raymond Salvatore Harmon tells **Jack Sergeant** about the magical traditions celebrated in London's festival of esoteric music and film this month

Invisible Jukebox

Andy Moor 22
The Ex guitarist grapples with *The Wire*'s anarchic record selection. Tested by **Mike Barnes**

The Caretaker 26
Ex-V/Vm prankster James Kirby converts pre-war nostalgia into modern-day haunted audio, healing emotional and political memory loss. By **Mark Fisher**

Dan Graham 30
Anne Hilde Neset uncovers the American artist's musical connections, from Glenn Branca and Sonic Youth to fan worship, in his *Rock My Religion* film

Comus 34
Nearly 40 years after their demonic *First Utterance* scourged hippiedom, the vanished British progressive folk outfit are back from the woods. By **Rob Young**

Ornette Coleman 40
Music as medicine, sound as universal grammar: **Phil Freeman** hears the philosophy of the free jazz legend, curator of this month's UK Meltdown Festival

Epiphanies 106
Erik Davis gets entangled in the sonic cobweb of György Ligeti's awe-inspiring *Requiem*

The Masthead

Ornette Coleman

When the news came through to *The Wire* office earlier this year that Ornette Coleman was to curate the 2009 Meltdown festival on London's Southbank, jaws were dropping and gobs were smacking left, right and centre.

Ornette might be one of the genuine greats of post-war American music, but he remains a marginal figure for a number of reasons, not least of which is the fact that even now, 50 years after he made his initial breakthrough in New York City, as described by Phil Freeman in his interview with the saxophonist that starts on page 40 of this month's issue, he continues to perform a highly complex form of improvised instrumental music based on a system, harmolodics, that some of his closest collaborators still regard as a riddle wrapped inside an enigma, a music that offers considerable rewards to any listener willing to meet it head on but which resists easy assimilation.

To put it mildly, Ornette seemed an unlikely choice to front a festival whose previous curators, including Elvis Costello, Laurie Anderson, Nick Cave, Scott Walker, Morrissey, David Bowie, Patti Smith, Jarvis Cocker and so on and so forth, seem to have been chosen, in part at least, for their ability to mix edgy with sexy, to combine a certain level of middlebrow cultural cachet with a more than certain level of middlebrow celebrity status.

Hopes (or possibly fears) on the part of the Southbank) that Ornette might take this opportunity to storm one of the UK's principle temples of high culture, turning the festival into a summit meeting of the harmolodic hordes, dissipated somewhat when the initial line-up was announced, which seemed to conform a little too easily to the now standard Meltdown mix of fellow travellers (in this case, Charlie Haden, Jamaaladeen Tacuma, Bachir Attar), famous friends (Yoko Ono), eager and young (relatively speaking) would be acolytes (Yo La Tengo) and 'what the fuck?' interlopers (how did Moby get in here?).

But enough with the carping. The fact that one of the most advanced musical minds on the planet has been afforded such an elevated platform to promulgate his deeply humanistic take on the music making process should be a no holds barred cause for rejoicing. We are happy to join the chorus of approval with this month's cover story, in which Ornette is as gnomic and unpredictable as ever. It bodes well for the festival itself.

Tony Herrington

Issue 304 June 2009

£3.90 ISSN 0952-0600

The Wire
23 Jack's Place, 3 Corbet Place, London E1 6NN, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 7422 5010
Fax: +44 (0)20 7422 5011
thewire.co.uk

Publisher
Tony Herrington tony@thewire.co.uk

Editor
Chris Shaw chris@thewire.co.uk
Deputy Editor
Anne Hilde Neset anne@thewire.co.uk
Reviews Editor
Derek Walmsley derek@thewire.co.uk
Editor-at-Large
Rob Young rob@thewire.co.uk
Editorial Assistant
Nick Richardson nick@thewire.co.uk

Art Direction & Design
Ben Weaver art@thewire.co.uk
Design
Patrick Ward patrick@thewire.co.uk

Advertising Sales
Andy Tait andy@thewire.co.uk
Shena Wendman shana@thewire.co.uk
Advertising Production
Rich Lucas design@thewire.co.uk

Subscriptions & Administration
Ben House subs@thewire.co.uk

Special Projects: Listings & Subscriptions
Lisa Blanning lisa@thewire.co.uk

Web Editor
Susanna Glaser susanna@thewire.co.uk
Assistant Web Editor
Nathan Budzinski nathan@thewire.co.uk

Archivist
Edwin Pouncey edwin@thewire.co.uk

Words
Jennifer Allan, Steve Barker, Mike Barnes, Clive Bell, Marcus Boon, Michael Bracewell, Jon Bywater, Nick Cain, Philip Clark, Mia Clarke, Byron Coley, Julian Cowley, Christoph Cox, Alan Cummings, Sam Davies, Brian Dillon, Phil England, Kodwo Eshun, Phil Freeman, Louise Gray, Andy Hamilton, Simon Hampson, Owen Hatherley, Jim Haynes, Richard Henderson, Ken Hollings, Hua Hsu, David Keenan, Rahima Khazam, Alba Kopf, Stewart Lee, Alan Licht, Dave Mandl, Brian Marley, Marc Masters, Bill Meyer, Keith Moliné, Will Montgomery, Brian Morton, Ian Penman, Tom Perchard, Edwin Pouncey, Simon Reynolds, Tom Ridge, Peter Shapiro, Chris Sharp, Philip Sherburne, Nick Southgate, Joseph Stannard, Dave Stelfox, David Stubbs, Nick Sylvester, Dave Tompkins, David Toop, Dan Warburton, Val Wilmer, Barry Witherden, Matthew Worthington

Images
Sébastien Agnetti, Lena Amuat, Shinya Aizawa, Kareem Black, Chris Buck, Eric Coleman, Jesse Chahak, Leon Chew, Tara Darby, Poppy de Villeneuve, Maja Flink, Erwin Frerin, Dominik Gigler, Tim Gutt, Brad Herms, Raphael Hefti, Derek Henderson, Tom Hintenlwan, James, Jak Kilby, Dirk Lindner, Philippe Lebruman, Mark Mahaney, Joss McKinley, Chris Mottalini, Gérard, Rory Savage, Pencil, Michael Schmelling, Anna Schon, Clara Shilland, Jan Streitmann, Olaf Unverzart, Danielle van Ark, Eva Vermandel, Muir Vidler, Kai von Rohrscheidt, Jake Walters, Jeremy & Claire Weiss, Winni Wintermeyer, Keiko Yoshida

Mark Mahaney

Distribution

News stands

UK, Europe & Rest of World (excl USA)
COMAG, Specialist Division
Tavistock Works, Tavistock Road
West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QX
Tel: +44 (0)1895 433800
steven.shara@comag.co.uk

USA
IPD (Source Interlink Fulfillment Div)
27500 Riverview Center Blvd
Suite 400, Bonita Springs, FL 34134
Tel: 239 949 4450
rsonnenberg@ucs-inc.com

Bookshops

Worldwide
Central Books (Magazines Dept)
99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN
Tel: +44 (0)20 8986 4854
sasha@centralbooks.com

Independent record shops

UK & Europe
Shellshock, 23A Coldharbour Road
London N15 4EL
Tel: +44 (0)20 8800 9110
Fax: +44 (0)20 8800 9140
info@shellshock.co.uk

USA
Forced Exposure
219 Medford St
Malden, MA 02148, 7381
Fax: 781.321.0321
fe@forcedexposure.com

Rest of World
Contact *The Wire* direct
Tel: +44 (0)20 7422 5022
Fax: +44 (0)20 7422 5011
subs@thewire.co.uk

NB The Wire can also supply record shops in Europe direct

Subscriptions

Print Subscription

12 issues
UK £39
Europe £55
USA/Canada US$88/£56
Rest of the World (Air) £85
Rest of the World (Surface) £55

See page 100 for full details

Digital Subscription

12 months
Worldwide £29.50

See page 100 for full details

The Wire is published 12 times a year by *The Wire* Magazine Ltd. Printed by St Ives plc.

The Wire was founded in 1982 by Anthony Wood. Between 1984–2000 it was part of Nalin Attallah's Nemare Group. In December 2000 it was purchased in a management buy-out by the magazine's staff. It continues to be published as a 100 per cent independent operation.

The views expressed in *The Wire* are those of the respective contributors and are not necessarily shared by the magazine or its staff. *The Wire* assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts, photographs, illustrations or promotional items. Copyright in the UK and abroad is held by the publisher or by freelance contributors. Unauthorised reproduction of any item is forbidden.

The Heads/White Hills

The first of a limited split LP series featuring UK's krautpsych masters The Heads and New York's premier space rockers White Hills.

Radial Lauren Limited Vinyl

Longstone
Kabuki

Alien soundscapes and beat driven workouts from electronic experimentalists 6th studio album

Acid Mothers Temple
Lord of the Underground Vishnu and the Magic Elixir

Made up entirely of new studio recordings documenting AMT in fine form flying at full speed & dishing out 3 slabs of Turkish Psych, meets Krautrock, served up AMT style

Audio Control Pink Vinyl & CD

Acid Mothers Temple
Interstellar Guru & Zero

The most prolific and widely known of the various Acid Mothers Temple collectives Psychedelic space rock music, free form and experimental. An experience you cannot miss!

Homeopathic CD

Nero's Day At Disneyland
From Nothing Fantasylands

A triumphant and bombastic art techno project orchestrated by Brock Housfield from Oakland California Blending haunted 15th century sacred music with a tangled mess of Dum out electron c noise with crushingly huge sense of scale

Rock Rock Rave CD

Lydia Lunch
Big Sexy Noise

Ltd edition vinyl mini album from Gelon Drunk s James Johnston Terry Edwards & Ian White fronted by Lydia Lunch New material + Lou Reed's "Kill Your Sons"

Setanta Vinyl

William Basinski
92982

" n gorgeous slice of music as willing as any recent pop confection to coat the parameters of your next grand emotional wake-up. " Calum Marsh colemachineglow com

Wand
Hard Knox

All of the songs on this collection have been at one time or another considered for inclusion on a Wooden Wand album. Most of the recordings were done at my then-home in beautiful Knoxville, TN between October 2002 and January of 2007, just prior to the retirement of the Wooden Wand name James Jackson Toth

Fantastic Plastic CD

65daysofstatic
Escape From New York

Live album recorded at Madison Square Garden & Radio City Music Hall shows from 65daysofstatic's 2008 tour supporting The Cure plus a DVD road movie of their American tour including live footage

Monotreme CD/DVD

RECORDS

CARGO RECORDS

PLAY.COM

17 Heathmans Road Parsons Green London SW6 4TJ • phone 020 7731 5125 • fax 020 7731 3866 • email info@cargorecords.co.uk • www.cargorecords.co.uk

THE V. SESSIONS

live / on-demand recording sessions
from renaissance to electronic music

only at http://theVsessions.com

May 28 >> CHRISTIAN FENNESZ >> Live solo set
June 11 >> PHILIPPE HERREWEGHE >> Cristóbal de Morales
June 15 >> BL!NDMAN >> J.S. Bach, Eric Sleichim, Steve Reich, John Cage

Letters

The numbers game

Great to see a Primer on a classic analogue fetish piece of gear like the Roland TB-303 Bass Line (*The Wire* 303). However, a few comments on the piece. First, the 303 has no sinewave output, so it is not possible for there to be the "303's sinewaves at work" the 303 only features triangle and square waves from its oscillator. Secondly, I don't think you can write an article about the 303 and not mention its companion TR-606 drum machine. It was designed by the same Japanese team that worked on the 303, and as a companion to it, it is *the* beat machine in a lot of early Acid records and really opened the 303 possibilities up to live performance, adding a small portable drum machine with an amazing interface that can be programmed on the fly and that syncs beautifully. Additionally the 606 was the basis for the more heavy sounding 808 and 909 drum machines that are ultra-coveted by any producer working with beats up to this date.

Carlos Giffoni via email

Love cry

According to Tony Harrington's review of The Flow Trio's *Rejuvenation* (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 303) we are sinister accomplices of Dr Frankenstein, aka ESP Disk's Bernard Stollman, who are digging up Albert Ayler's grave with our music. Actually, Tom Abbs, the label manager at ESP, asked us to record. We spent a few hours in the studio and sent them the tape. We just did what we've been doing for four years and what we did on our first release *Flow*. We played together. No sinister plot whatsoever exists to repeat anyone's music or live in anyone else's skin, as Harrington says we do on the CD.

There are only about 500 people on the planet who will buy a CD of this kind of music. They know exactly how much care, subtlety and musicianship is required to get close to that musical parad gm. You sure don t arrive there by losing yourself, as Harrington states. Charles and I have done. Instead you listen for the blues in the dark space, feel the implied pulse and try like hell to capture the moment with sincerity. It s much more like trying to write a poem about love then it is about imitation or monsters. Albert Ayler created a platform for improvising that many people have performed on. Unlike some, we are lucky enough to have individually worked with most if not all of the major original figures in every version of free jazz who survived the 1960s, many of whom were directly connected to Ayler. The average age of Flow Trio members is 57 years old. None of us has ever kept our love of Ayler's music or his influence on us a secret, and we've all considered him as one of our main influences for about 40 years each. We've spent our lives playing this way. We've legitimately earned the right to enjoy the beautiful privilege of reaching to play the way we do.

Joe Morris via email

Looking back in anger

Tony Harrington's review of the new Wooden Shjips album (*The Wire* 303) was quite spirited, but typical in its backwards looking nostalgia. Despite having never heard The Gun Club, The Flesh Eaters, or any Suicide after their second album (disqualifying the entire premise of the review), The Shjips are honoured to be credited with wrecking the legacies of Tony's cult rock favourites. Some people value music and some people sit around fretting about who is "colonising the so-called avant rock underground". Guess which category Tony Harrington falls into?

While I'm at it – Alan Vega was not a loser, the Shjips are not "stoners", and Siltbreeze is issuing some of the best rock 'n' roll around. Where is Lester Bangs indeed!

Don Rifle San Francisco

Sunn don't shine

As a reader of your magazine for many years now, I always appreciated you featuring new avant garde and experimental music as well as your ability to introduce the historic avant garde to new generations. But with much disappointment I have noticed that recently this ability has faded away more and more. For example I refer to your heavy focus on Doom, Black and new "avant" Metal, and your grim attempt to make this genre appear as a new form of experimental music (I admit I was truly annihilated when I saw the idiot posers known as Sunn O))) on your cover). Thankfully, as a 57 year old music lover, I know exactly what this is all about – it is no more than a mere commercial trend.

But what finally pushed me to write this letter is the review that Rob Young wrote about My Cat Is An Alien & Enore Zaffiri's *Through The Magnifying Gloss Of Tomorrow* CD/DVD on Atavistic (*The Wire* 303). This is a work that should be considered a milestone of the last decade. I know Enore Zaffiri's craft and recordings very well. As Brian Morton concluded in Issue 270: "No one with an interest in recent syntheses of voice and electronic music can afford to miss them." It is not surprising he is involved with My Cat Is An Alien, who I consider one of the most original new music entities. Their collaborative CD is the perfect union of two generations – an actual bridge between historic and new avant garde. I saw the trio performing last November, and it is indeed the subtlety that disappointed Young which is the real strong point of their musical encounter. The same subtlety makes works like *Musico Per Un Anno* and *Progetto QB1* timeless masterpieces, and in this record it's even more enhanced by My Cat Is An Alien's unmistakable musical lyricism.

Last but not least, I must comment on Young's mistaken description of the DVD contents – the "video paintings" which he credits to both Roberto Opalio and Enore Zaffiri are in fact how Zaffiri defines his video art, as in the DVD titles. This has nothing to do with the film by Roberto Opalio entitled *Light_Earth_Blue_Silver* featured in the set, and which Young does not mention. This is a true oversight, since some years ago I attended the screening of this film at the Sage in Gateshead. I can affirm that I have rarely seen such amazing work even by the most highly praised film makers.

Undeniably the DVD represents a key document, featuring for the first time ever two important chapters in the video art experience of both artists. This is the kind of work a magazine like *The Wire* should believe in.

Nuno Fernandes via email

Mothership disconnection

In your review of Volcano The Bear's 7" "That People Don't Know They Are Monsters" (Size Matters, *The Wire* 302), Byron Coley described the band as "Daniel Padden's mothership". Although the idea is appealing, I should say that Volcano The Bear isn't mine or anybody else's mothership, especially in the case of this 7", on which I didn't play a single note.

Daniel Padden via email

Carrections

Issue 303: Dhneohtrix Point Never's Daniel Lopatin does not play modular synthesizer as stated in Jim Haynes's Outer Limits review. He plays analogue polysynths. Yoshi Wada's *Earth Horn With Electric Drone* is an EM/Editions Omega Point CD/3×LP release, not as stated in Soundcheck.

Issue 301: In Alan Licht's On Location review of Robert Ashley's operas, Tom Hamilton should have been credited with the production's "spatialised sound design", not Cas Bouman.

Write to: Letters, *The Wire*, 23 Jack's Place, 6 Corbet Place, London E1 6NN, UK, fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, letters@thewire.co.uk

Next month in the July issue of *The Wire*

305

Philip Sharburne meets **Maritz von Oswald**

David Keenan on **Ramleh**

Byron Coley on **Ran Blake**

Plus more in-depth underground music news, interviews and reviews than any other zine

The July issue of *The Wire* will be on sale from 11 June.

For updates on what's happening in the wide world of *The Wire*, sign up to *The Conduit* our fortnightly newsletter, or subscribe to our RSS feeds, both at thewire.co.uk

If you have problems finding copies of *The Wire* in the shops, please let us know by mailing subs@thewire.co.uk. Or better still, take out a subscription: for details turn to page 104 or point your browser at thewire.co.uk/subscribe

Israel M :: Nareah

A journey through a deeply introspective sonic desert. Israel Martinez merges field recordings with synthesis and some instruments, generating a richly complex yet minimalist hypnotic music.

israelm.com

Out now on
aagoo.com

Distribution
Cargo

NEW +3DB RELEASES

BARRETT, BEHRENS, KVINNSLAND, RODEN, WATSON, WINDEREN: SLEPPET

A STUNNING SOUNDWORKS BASED ON FIELD RECORDINGS OF THE NORWEGIAN LANDSCAPE

GOLDEN SERENADES: HAMMOND POPS

NOISE-VETERANS JOHN BERGE AND SIR SUPERMAN JOIN FORCES TO MOIST THE SONIC OUTPUT OF MASTER ORGAN PLAYER SIGBJORN APELAND

RUBEN. S. GJERTSEN: GRAINS

ACOUSTIC CHAMBER MUSIC PERFORMED BY THE ARSTI GJERTSEN QUARTET A SUBTLE BLEND OF DELICATE AND LUSH SOUNDS PAIRED WITH THE FRENETIC ENERGY OF COMPLEXITY

BAKTRUPPEN: 1985–2009

20 YEARS IN THE COUNTYARD OF NYMTORGET THEATRE PRODUCES A FEAST OF SONIC MATERIALS

ALSO

+3DB SUB – A NEW LINE OF CD-R RELEASES
COMING UP: OUR MIXTAPES VOL. 1 AND MORE

WWW.PLUS3DB.NET
JKNUDS1@ONLINE.NO
WWW.MUSIKKPERATOGENE.NO

Bitstream

News from under the radar. Compiled by **Nick Richardson**

Damon & Naomi of Exact Change

Celebrating 20 years of avant garde book publishing, Damon and Neomi's **Exact Change** imprint are holding an event, sponsored by *The Wire*, at the Old American Can Factory in Brooklyn, New York City, on 23 June. Musicians will be responding to texts published by Exact Change over the years – Joan La Barbara to Joseph Cornell's *Dreams*, Loren Connors to Kafka's *Blue Octavo Notebooks*, Alan Licht to *Album Exact Change*, Emily Manzo's Till By Turning to Morton Feldman's *Give My Regards To Eighth Street*, and Alex Waterman to Stefan Themerson's *Cardinal Pölätüo*. exactchange.com

The Fall's **Mark E Smith** is due to take part in a discussion with festival director Michael Stewart as part of the Huddersfield Literary Festival this month. The event is scheduled to take place on 14 June at Huddersfield's Lawrence Batley Theatre. lbt-uk.org

The Fall have also recently signed to Domino Records and are set to head into the studio imminently – a new album should be ready for release by the end of 2009. dominorecordco.com

The eighth **Dis-Patch** art and music festival takes place in Belgrade, Serbia from 23 October–5 November. With live performances from recent cover star Kode9 & The Spaceape, Pan Sonic, Kim Hiorthøy, T++, Martin Tétreault, KTL, Mark Ernestus, Valerio Cosi and more. This year the festival honours Sasu Ripatti as its Artist in Focus, with five performances from Ripatti under his various guises (Vladislav Delay, Uusitalo Luomo, etc), and the world premiere of his first installation project, *The Only Copy*. There will also be a Raster-Noton label showcase, music technology workshops, film screenings and a special kids' programme from 9–11 October (Kid's Patch). dis-patch.com

Barcelona's Sonar Festival has also cottoned on to the current trend for kids' events. **SonarKids** takes place on 21 June, and features a range of activities including DJing, beatboxing, dance classes, illustration workshops and Lego building. Laurent Garnier and others will be also be playing specially tailored live sets through a sound system adapted for small, sensitive ears. sonarkids.com

Post-rock veterans **Stereolab** are on indefinite hiatus. "We have had to cancel the two last shows that we were scheduled to play," announced manager Martin Pike on the group's website, "and there are no plans to record new tracks." Their new album *Chemical Chords 2*, a collection of songs recorded at the same time as last year's *Chemical Chords*, is still scheduled for release later this year. stereolab.co.uk

Though Dutch dance music imprint **Clone** announced its closure in January this year, founder Serge Verschuur has now announced that the label is to subdivide into a series of specialist sublabels. Clone Loft Supreme will take care of the label's more traditional House and disco sides, while the Clone West Coast series will deal with local talent from The Hague area, Clone Aqualong with Drexciya-style electro, Clone For Daze with House, and Clone Bassment with Techno. clone.nl

A new, posthumous **J Dilla** album is pencilled in for release this summer on Nature Sounds. *Jay Stay Paid* brings together some of Dilla's earliest productions, culled from old DATs and floppy disks, with music he made in hospital. It has been executive produced by Dilla's mother Maureen Yancey and was mixed and arranged by Pete Rock. Though most of the record is instrumental, DOOM, Raekwon and Black Thought from The Roots make guest MC appearances. nature-sounds.net

A compilation of music released on cult New York imprint **ZE** is due for imminent release on Strut Records. Founded by British journalist Michael Zilkha and French art student Michel Esteban in 1979, ZE put out music by Suicide, Cristina and Kid Creole, among others. The new compilation celebrates ZE's 30th anniversary. strut-records.com

Photos by **Lisa Kristal**, daughter of Hilly Kristal – owner of the influential New York club CBGB's – are going on show at the Proud Gallery in London. The exhibition features previously unseen shots of The Ramones, Television, Patti Smith, Talking Heads, Blondie and plenty of the CBGB's crowd. CBGB: The Home Of Underground Rock runs from 4 June–5 July. proud.co.uk

Dean and Laurie Bleckwood are extending the design aesthetic of their sleeves for John Fahey's Revenant label via their new design company Medium. Somewhat eccentrically, the Bleckwoods claim their designs are realised via 'thoughtography' – the transmission of images onto photographic paper through the power of thought alone. mediumthoughtographic.com

A three day event in France aims to reinvigorate the **Rock In Opposition** movement of the 1970s, with performances from veterans Univers Zero and Magma, who celebrate their 40th anniversary this year, along with a host of other RIO-inspired acts from across the globe. The concerts take place at the architecturally impressive Maison de la Musique in La Gerne, France, 18–20 September. rocktime.org/rio

DIY cassette label **Snatch Tapes** have issued a final tape to mark the 30th anniversary of their first release. *Carriage Return* consists of two 20 minute sound collages, assembled from cassettes, minidiscs, reel-to-reel tapes and CD-Rs from the Snatch Tapes archive. In true DIY spirit, listeners are supplied with copies of the MP3 files and sleeve artwork to print out with which to produce their own tape. The release is available for free from the Carriage Return website. Collectors wishing to archive their copies can send them to Snatch Tapes to have them authenticated and stamped for a small fee. psouper.co.uk/snatch/index.html

Software providing a real-time graphic interpretation of sonic data that enables users to 'see sound' has been developed by Sonic Arts Network, Whitefield Schools and Centre, and The London Philharmonic Orchestra. The free **LumiSonic** software allows hearing-impaired people to interact with a specifically designed graphic representation of sound. The software can also be used as a musical instrument: sounds can be loaded up, processed in real-time and tuned to scale systems. sonicartsnetwork.org

The **V Sessions** website is now up and running, making specially-convened recording sessions available to watch via free download. The first of these feature Christian Fennesz and Philippe Herreweghe interpreting Cristobal de Morales's *Missa De Beata Vergine*, and the sax quartet Blindman performing pieces by Bach, Cage and Reich. thevsessions.com

Three classic punk and reggae films by German film director **Wolfgang Build** are released this month. *Punk In London* (1977) and *Punk In England* (1978) concentrate on UK punk and post-punk, with interviews and live footage from The Clash, X-Ray Spex, The Adverts, The Lurkers, The Specials, The Jam, Ian Dury and more. Meanwhile *Reggae In A Babylon* (1978) takes a look at the birth of British reggae just before the beginning of Thatcher's reign in the late 1970s. The same distributors are offering a new documentary about **Depeche Mode**, *The Dark Progression*, due for DVD release on 16 June. The film traces the group's history, from their early flirtations with New Romanticism through to their later work, and contains rare live footage and interviews with all members, plus collaborators and contemporaries including Gary Numan, Thomas Dolby and OMD's Andy McCluskey. Available via MVD Visuel. mvdb2b.com

Portuguese musician **Rafael Toral** has launched a new website, featuring an expansive archive section (Noise Precision Library) where rare and unreleased recordings are available for download, along with the rest of Toral's back catalogue. rafaeltoral.net

Original paintings and drawings by **Miles Davis** will be shown at London's Exchange Court Gallery from 1–6 June. The pieces have been acquired from Davis's sculptor girlfriend Jo Gelbard's collection and fuse a fascination with the female form

Karin Dreijer Andersen, Mikkel Sasha, Ralf Richardt Strobech (The Knife)

with elements of tribal African art. The exhibition is timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of Davis's *Kind Of Blue*.

The London Jazz Festival has announced its first concert this year: a one-off performance by saxophonist **Sonny Rollins** on 14 November at the Barbican. Further programme details have yet to be announced. londonjazzfestival.org.uk

Joe Carducci, the former co-owner and in-house producer of SST Records (home to Black Flag, Meat Puppets, Minutemen et al), has a new film in the pipeline. *Epsilon Idi*, a science fiction feature written and produced by Carducci is due to be shot this summer in LA. The soundtrack features contributions from Thurston Moore and Doom Metallers The Hidden Hand.

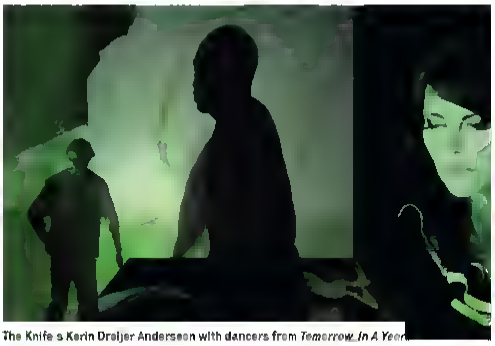
The De Wolfe music library are releasing a compilation of unreleased incidental music from cult BBC comedy ***Monty Python's Flying Circus***. This is the third instalment in De Wolfe's Library Music reissue series following last year's *Kung Fu Super Sounds* release. dewolfemusic.co.uk

A 1000 minute excerpt from **Jem Finer**'s *Longplayer* is due to be performed at London's Roundhouse on 12 September. Longplayer is the 1000-year-long piece which has been playing now at Trinity Buoy Wharf lighthouse in London's Docklands for the last nine and a half years. Finer has adapted the piece for an orchestra of six musicians playing 234 Tibetan singing bowls. To cover costs, interested parties are invited to sponsor individual bowls. In return for which they get a ticket to the concert and a word of their choice engraved inside the bowl. longplayer.org/live

Berlin festivals **Transmediale** and **Club Transmediale** have put out their annual call for works. Two prizes are up for grabs: the Transmediale Award for art works and the Vilem Flusser Theory Award for papers and research projects. "Entries that exemplify new and critical forms of digital expression and interaction are encouraged, as are works from countries and regions in which digital art and culture are emergent." Prize money totals €10,000. For more details on how to enter, visit clubtransmediale.de

Jon Savage, author of the punk history *England's Dreaming*, will be interviewed by *The Wire* contributor Michael Bracewell at Waterstone's Gower Street in London on 12 June. The evening coincides with the release of *The England's Dreaming Tapes*, a collection of outtakes from Savage's book and interviews with major players from the early days of punk.

Swedish avant pop duo **The Knife**'s opera, *Tomorrow In A Year*, is set to open at Copenhagen's Royal Danish Theatre on 2 September and will subsequently tour Europe. Inspired by Charles Darwin's *On The Origin Of Species* which celebrates its 150th anniversary this November, the opera draws on pop and classical structures and is choreographed by Japanese dancer Hiroaki Umeda. hotelproforma.dk



The Knife's Karin Dreijer Andersson with dancers from *Tomorrow In A Year*

A new software application **Twitter DJ** allows DJs to broadcast details of their sets to the Twitter social networking site in real time. The programme sends updates every 30 seconds from the popular Traktor DJ application to a designated account, and promises Twitter followers an intimate insight into the DJ's craft. Developed by Brian McDade of Richie Hawtin's Minus label, it was test-driven by Hawtin on his most recent tour. twitter.com/rhawtin

An exhibition of **Concrete Poetry** opens at the ICA in London this month, with visual art from sound poets Vito Acconci, Henri Chopin and Karl Holmqvist among pieces by Philip Guston, David Hockney, Ian Hamilton Finlay and more. From 17 June. ica.org.uk

Rumours are rife of a split 12" by **Buriel** and his former schoolmate **Four Tet** aka Kieran Hebden, titled "Moth/Wolf Cub". The record apparently shipped on 4 May but has already sold out. The artwork, naturally, is all black, and there are no promo copies available. □

Trip Or Squeek

By **Savage Pencil**

BUSINESS IS SLOW AT THE BROKEN HIP PRIEST'S OLDE WORLDE SNUFF SHOPPE
GAHHRRN! I'VE BIN SITTIN' HERE WIV ME LEG UP FOR WEEKS NOW AND NOT A SNIFF OF CUSTOM! HANG ON THO! THERE GOES THE SHOP BELL!
KER CHING
WELL, IF IT ISN'T ME OLD ELECTRO MUCKER'S MOUSE ON MARS WHAT DO YOU BUGGERIN' WANT?
WE HEARD ABOUT YOUR NEW SNUFF SHOP AND THOUGHT, THAT'S INTERESTING, LET'S CHECK OUT SOME SNUFF ACTION!
SNIF!
YEH! YEH!
OH YEAH? SOMETHIN' TELLS ME THAT IT'S NOT JUST MENTHOL FLAVOURED NOSTRIL BACCY YOU'VE COME ROUND HERE FOR?
ER WELL... NO
AK-CHEW!
WE JUST WONDERED IF YOU'D LIKE TO MAKE ANOTHER VON SUPENFED ALBUM?
KACHOO! NOT BLEEDIN' LIKELY!
HEX-TERMINATE!
EE YOW! WOTTA GROUCH!
CLIK!
WWW.SAVAGEPENCIL.COM

Louis Armstrong
Boxing clever

Two of Louis Armstrong's collaged tape boxes, 1950s

Steven Brower's *Satchmo: The Wonderful World And Art Of Louis Armstrong* is a wild book filled with incredible visuals that will make your eyes wiggle regardless of whether you're a fan of his music. Throughout the latter part of his career, when he toured constantly, Armstrong recorded tons of tapes on his portable reel-to-reel decks. He'd make mix tapes for himself, record live gigs, backstage conversations and random chatter. When he died, he left hundreds of boxes of tapes behind. These were duly catalogued and archived accordingly. What no one noticed at the time was that Armstrong had created brilliant collages to decorate each of the boxes. It took Brower – best known as a designer – to realise what a visual feast this was. "Still," he writes, "the relationship between jazz improvisation and collage is clear. Armstrong himself referred to his music as 'rag time' rather than 'jazz', the term 'rag' referring to the 'ragging' of tunes by plantation workers – that is, to take an existing melody, such as the European songs the plantation owners would play, and improvise on top of and around the melody, to create something new. Armstrong's collages work in the very same manner: he is taking an existing work, cutting it up, rearranging it, creating something fresh – a visual ragging, if you will."

Satchmo has a solid overview of Armstrong's career, and some revelatory selections from his journals, collage-filled scrapbooks and correspondence. But the meat of the book is the collaged tape boxes, which recall the later photomontage work of Romaine Bearden and also (oddly) the American surrealist Joseph Cornell, who lived within four miles of Armstrong's house. The visual work is generally unrelated to the musical content, having a crazed logic and beauty all its own. Armstrong is quoted as saying one of his hobbies "is using a lot of Scotch tape". We should all be glad he did. ☐ *Satchmo: The Wonderful World And Art Of Louis Armstrong* is published by Abrams. www.abramsbooks.com

Byron Coley

Cut & Splice
Feeling the space

Iron man: Benedict Drew

Cut & Splice: Living Rooms is dedicated to "exploring the domestic soundscape", finding the extraordinary and the resonant in everyday spaces and objects. It's a two-day festival of performance, installation, video, broadcast, podcast and discussion. More broadly, it's looking to explore the acoustic properties and sonic experiences of walled, architectural spaces. Despite being a "celebration of the mundane", it takes place in the extravagant setting of Wilton's Music Hall in East London, the last surviving such grand old venue in the world.

Among the artists featured will be Alvin Lucier. Though he won't be performing *I Am Sitting In A Room*, it will nonetheless act as a "reference point" in the festival, according to organiser Jonathan Webb.

Among those most concerned with extracting and processing aural matter from the music hall setting itself are Brandon LaBelle, Jason Lescalleet and Bob Levene, who will be recording the sounds of the venue and mixing them back live into the space. CM von Hausswolff and John Duncan will together be exploring the more sinister aspect of domestic sound – the audio-hallucinatory realm of things that go bump in the night, the by-products of insomniac anxiety. "[John and I] were talking to each other about 'inner domestics' – mental, that is – as well as certain creatures living in domestic spaces such as rats, bugs and so on... at this moment it is not clear what this actually will come out as."

At the other end of the scale are The Domestic Appliance Audio Research Society, which, according to co-founder Benedict Drew, was started out of a need to deal with the increasingly intrusive levels of noise emanating from the ageing fridge and washing machine at his house. "This," he says, "led me to think about an anti-exotic practice of field recording" – one which focused less on the great outdoors but the banal indoors. The DAARS performance will bring together text and speech as well as live amplification of appliances or playback of those too large to cart to the venue.

Right back to Marcel Duchamp's dada urinal, there have been attempts to open up art to the lowly but ubiquitous matter of everyday life, to broaden the criteria of what stuff gets to be used for art and what doesn't, and thereby to expand the palette. However, for organiser Webb, The Living Room is not really about that. It is, he says, about exploring the "humour and history" of unconsidered domestic soundscapes which nonetheless fill our lives, shape our moods and feelings and leave unexplored traces in the subconscious. ☐ Cut & Splice takes place on 19–20 June. livingrooms.cutandsplice.com

David Stubbs

Catriona Clayson (Drew)

Gareth Williams with Mary Currie

Flaming Tunes
After the Heat

"When the industry came too close Gareth would always back away and disappear out of view." So states Andrew Jacques, formerly of These Records, referring to Gareth Williams, formerly of This Heat. This statement goes some way towards explaining why Williams, who died of cancer on Christmas Eve 2001 aged just 48, released so little music following the break up of This Heat in the early 1980s, just a few years after it had formed in London in 1976. But this month sees the release of a CD that should underline Williams's status as a singular songwriter and producer in his own right, away from the mix of oblique art rock strategies and abrasive proto-punk attitude that marked out This Heat as one of the most original groups of its generation.

Originally released on cassette in 1985, *Flaming Tunes* is a set of raw but plangent songs and instrumentals that arose out of Williams's long term friendship with singer Mary Currie. Recorded at Williams's house in South London, "in a room full of instruments and things that could make noise", as Currie puts it in a recent online essay, the music is low tech rather than lo-fi, the songs and performances animated by the idiosyncratic mix and arrangements that emerged intuitively from the materials at hand – a basic Casio keyboard that had been given to Currie and her young son as a present, a Roland drum machine on loan from Scritti Politti's Tom Morley, what sounds like an out of tune upright piano. "All the tunes grew from fragments – mine or [Gareth's]," explains Currie, who first met Williams when they were at a Surrey secondary school together. "Some stuff was captured in the moment with a tape machine ever ready, whereas other stuff evolved through more time-intensive processes. Gareth took charge of technical and structural concerns, but always consulted with me over my preferences. He always encouraged me to look for more, never assumed a superior position."

Much to Williams's dismay, in the late 90s the tape was bootlegged as This Heat's final demos. But as Mary Currie puts it in that online essay, the music on *Flaming Tunes* emerged from "a different energy" to the claustrophobic intensity and feral force that characterised This Heat. In contrast, these songs and performances sound domestic rather than apocalyptic, playful rather than urgent, irreverent but also deeply felt.

"I think the album stands up really well," suggests Andrew Jacques, who, having already co-produced reissues of This Heat material for both These and ReR, worked on the *Flaming Tunes* reissue alongside a number of Williams's former friends and colleagues, most of whom also contributed to the original sessions, including Williams's long term partner Nick Goodall (who died in 2007), and musician Mick Hobbs. "The songs are very strong and the resourcefulness of how they have been recorded and produced really backs them up," adds Jacques. "It's a very intimate listening experience at times, but it also has great scope and ambition in the arrangements."

Mary Currie is intrigued by the intense interest generated by the music. "I never thought people, apart from friends, were interested back then. We didn't seem to be looking for external interest. But equally we felt like it needed to extend beyond the living room [of Williams's house]. I was certainly surprised to stumble on an internet discussion forum in 2003 with a *Flaming Tunes* thread. The contributors were unclear as to what they'd heard – was it This Heat or something else?"

Even more surprising was the appearance in 2007 of a complete cover version of the original cassette, recorded in Texas by one M Leer and issued under the name Diamond Age. Has Currie heard it? What does she think of it? "Love it, intrigued by it – he's really found the essence and built it up in the same way as we did. Mr Leer, it seems, has used *Flaming Tunes* to make some discoveries of his own." □ *Flaming Tunes* is out now on Life And Living Records. flamingtunes.com

Tony Herrington

Unofficial Channels:
Avant-Garde Project

In the anarchic, amoral zone of music download sites, the Avant Garde Project at avantgardeproject.org is akin to a responsibly run library. Every week for around three years, a single rare or out of print LP, complete with cover scans and introductory notes, is transcribed and made available for download as a BitTorrent. "In early 2006, I realised that Mauricio Kagel's *Acustica* was not available in any form except some MP3s on Ubuweb," emails the curator, who uses the name Lou Davenport. "I wanted to share that amazing work, and so I had the idea of transcribing my LP copy. This got me thinking that I was probably one of a very few people with (a) a large collection of late 20th century classical LPs, (b) a high-end analogue rig with an A/D converter."

AGP operates below the official radar, but the sparingly selected, deliberately rare instalments suggest Davenport feels a duty of care to the heritage. With audio encoded in lossless FLAC form, AGP aims at weighty recordings that do justice to the depth of the music, rather than flimsy MP3s ready to be infinitely duplicated across cyberspace. Many of the composers featured – Kagel, Henry Kaiser, Toru Takemitsu, Romanian spectralists Horatiu Radulescu and Iancu Dumitrescu – are a crucial part of 20th century music, yet their work was often issued in limited quantities in the first place, and part or even the whole of their catalogues remain out of print.

The AGP has also been imaginative in stretching the definition of the avant garde. Instalments have covered everything from Asian percussion and total improvisation (featuring Gruppo Nuova Consonanza) to the found avant garde of whale song, mechanical musical instruments and even steam locomotives. Davenport is also toying with the idea of a similar project for "folk/art music".

Though the AGP website maintains an archive of 100-plus instalments for download, some have been removed, generally amicably, at the request of record labels. Davenport argues that the original commercial release of most of the music was "driven more by cultural commitment than by a desire for personal gain", and sees the AGP as working towards the same social goals. Given the relative obscurity of some of the instalments, it's certainly feasible that some of the composers featured might welcome the fresh exposure. "I'm this totally unconnected music enthusiast living in the middle of nowhere," says Davenport, "and yet I've been able to provide sounds to people all over the world."

Derek Walmsley

Bora Yoon

By **Kurt Gottschalk**

Goddess of small things

Bora Yoon steps into the middle of a hub of cymbals, gongs, sticks and cables on an April evening at The Stone in New York City. She's wearing a nest of wires on her back, a few leading down into her boots. She holds her hair back and surveys her surroundings, then begins softly striking a row of Tibetan singing bowls with her hands, while humming a slow melody. Picking up a music box mechanism, she turns its crank, slowly still, as she steps on a pedal to loop her humming. Her casual yet determined method invites contemplation, her music box serving as a metaphor for her music's simple, mechanical beauty.

Over the course of her solo improvisation, she adds to her loops such sounds as pouring water, spoons tapped together and put through a filter to give a bass boom worthy of a dance club, a metronome, a hand-cranked radio, even the static of a live patch cord tapped with her finger. When struck, a set of wired windchimes fires samples of her voice softly whispering. The battery of cymbals, gongs and bells pulled from old telephones are played by sticks she triggers with pressure-sensitive pads in her boots.

There is something seemingly unintentional about Bora Yoon's vocals, as if she's unaware that she is singing aloud, as she casually yet methodically tends to preparations. Her voice provides a sense of ease, smoothing the edges while she rewires components or deals with the occasional technical failing. She comes off as patient and in control, yet the piece ends with an "Um" and a smile, trapped somewhere between a logical endpoint and the fact that she could, no doubt, do this all night.

Asked how in control of her assemblages she feels, she ponders. "70 to 75 per cent," she decides. "I plan as much as I can and whatever happens makes up the rest of it. You just set up your little artist's playpen and whatever happens happens. I set up an environment that needs to be filled, whether it's with sounds or poetry. It's like film music."

Much of her arsenal for the Stone gig was developed with the assistance of LEMUR (League of Electronic Musical Urban Robots), a New York organisation established to help musicians realise their electroacoustic whims. The automated devices mesh so well with the multilayered aesthetic she has spent the last several years developing, she says, that "my friends have started calling me 'Bora-bot'." Her work had been more in the model of singer-songwriter until an epiphany in 2005. Singing with a choir at an AIDS benefit, she heard the angelic ring of Tibetan singing bowls echoing through the church and the world of acoustic design opened up to her. She was quick to embrace it. The following year she provided music for a dance production in an enormous public swimming pool in Brooklyn, performed by a choir and a team of beatboxers on bicycles inside the pool; she positioned herself in the middle with violin and effects, creating what she calls a "sound mural".

"That was my introduction into the idea of space and getting site specific with work," she says. "How is sound different when you put it in a black box versus a church versus a swimming pool?"

Opportunities to work on such a scale are rare, but Yoon is always on the lookout for objects which hold sonic promise. "Two things that point to why I do the music I do are being Korean and being a pack rat," she says. "My mother always taught me not to throw anything away because you can use it for something. The first money I ever made was when I won a recycling poster contest in third grade."

In a quest for bigger sounds and a smaller rig, she started using mobile phones with stored samples and looping applications as her orchestra. Her work caught the attention of the Korean electronics manufacturers Samsung who, interested in the connection with her Korean heritage, produced a concert for her at Jazz at Lincoln Center. She had just turned 27. "I realised if not harnessed and handled well, I could have become a YouTube artist in about two seconds," she recalls sardonically. Fortunately she survived her 15 minutes and went on to tour with DJ Spooky. She also performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music with poet Sekou Sundiata's America Project, and she also appeared at The Human Voice in a New World Festival in New York, alongside vocalists Jaap Blonk, Joan La Barbara, David Moss and Trevor Wishart (as reviewed in *The Wire* 303).

Despite her various inventions (and audio evidence to the contrary), Yoon doesn't see her work as particularly 'avant garde'. "I think it's hilarious that people think my music is so experimental, because I think it's the most natural thing I've done," she says. "It's the source of music – getting in touch with that and letting it come out. The violin and orchestra training I've done, the voice lessons – when you sing, you move, so I use that."

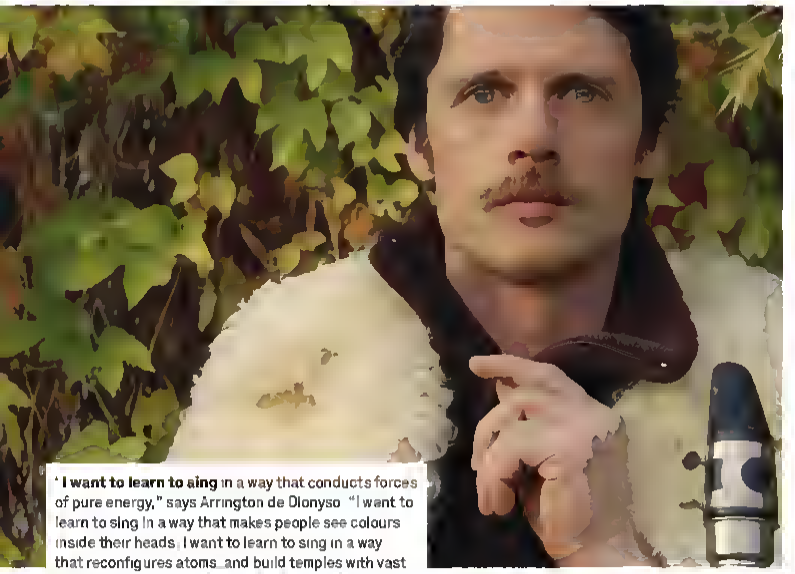
Her quest to find the sounds that live in everyday objects continues, as does an effort to reduce the amount of gear she carries. Her current work with LEMUR involves trying to place sonic booms in mid-air, something she refers to with a boisterous laugh as "invisible fireworks". A newly acquired potato masher holds particular appeal for the sound patterns it produces when spun on its end. "And my mother just gave me a stethoscope," she concludes. "I want to learn how to get really small. Go from the structure we're in to the structure we're actually living in. But that's probably just the Gemini in me that likes to fuck with people." ☐ borayoon.com

BFI
Central Bazaar
From avant-garde provocateur Stephen Dwoskin comes this poetic exploration of intimacy and performance. Includes a compelling drone score by celebrated composer Gavin Bryars.
DVD £19.99
Magick Lantern Cycle
KENNETH ANGER
This expansive 2-disc set explores the exquisite, arresting cinematic world of the influential underground legend Kenneth Anger
DVD (2-disc) £22.99
Blu-ray (2-disc) £24.99
MASTERWORKS OF THE AVANT-GARDE
Out 25 May
www.bfi.org.uk/filmstore

sunn
MONOLITHS &DIMENSIONS
CD / SOUTHERN LORD RECORDINGS / sunn100
MAXIMUM VOLUME YIELDS MAXIMUM RESULTS
www.ideologic.org www.southernlord.com
SOUTHERN LORD
RICHARD SERRA, out-of-round X, 1999 Paintstick on Hiromi paper, 79 1/2 x 79 inches, (201.9 x 200.7cm)
Distributed in Europe by Southern Records. www.southern.com

Arrington de Dionyso

By Daniel Spicer



'I want to learn to sing in a way that conducts forces of pure energy," says Arrington de Dionyso. "I want to learn to sing in a way that makes people see colours inside their heads. I want to learn to sing in a way that reconfigures atoms, and build temples with vast hallways of sound." This combination of drive and dreaminess has already seen the 34 year old vocalist and multi-instrumentalist explore some unusual corners of sound, since he first convened the avant garage group Old Time Religion in Olympia, Washington in 1995. After eight albums and several tours of the USA and Europe, he's still best known as the singer and guitarist in that primal rock unit, but it's just the tip of his iceberg.

As a solo artist, de Dionyso explores extended vocal techniques that aim to reconcile the primitive with the intellectual. "'Neolithic sophistication' was how I used to like to say it," he agrees. "I play ecstatic, trance-oriented energy music that also has the capacity to be self-reflective and psychologically insightful." On his most recent solo CD, last year's *I See Beyond The Black Sun*, that manifests as a fascination with the ancient, overtone-rich sound of throat singing – a long-term obsession. "I discovered throat singing in complete isolation when I was about five years old," he claims. "I didn't know anything at all about music from around the world at that point, but when I was older and heard Tuvan and Tibetan music on public radio, I knew it was the same thing I used to do back when I was just playing with the natural sounds. So I did a lot more listening and figured out what I needed to figure out about the more scientific aspects of controlling vocal harmonics, mastering specific techniques and ways of focusing in on specific vibrations."

De Dionyso's investigation of multiphonic vocals took him to Vietnamese ethnomusicologist and throat singing expert Tran Quan Hai in Paris. "He's the mad scientist of overtone singing," says de Dionyso. "He has probably done more than anyone to bring the possibilities of the human voice into the lens of

Cultured

scientific rigour. During my visits with him, after we spoke about various techniques we like to use, he had me hook up to his machine that makes a spectral reading of overtones on a computer monitor." If this scientific approach seems a little at odds with a music of overtly shamanic provenance, de Dionyso doesn't really see the distinction. "We can easily get mystical in appreciating the magic of the human voice or sound itself," he says, "but I get pretty tripped out even thinking about it like this – our ears can perceive sound because little tiny hairs move when the atoms of air are pushed back and forth, but those atoms are being pushed back and forth all around us all the time. With that in mind, there's almost no need to get into the esoteric understandings of the spiritual, metaphysical realms opened up to human consciousness through the use of the voice, and yet, of course, all that is there."

The other major presence in his solo work is the bass clarinet – a further source of overtones that naturally complements his vocal technique. "I aim for a very thorough awareness of the overtone possibilities of the bass clarinet, specifically as they are related to the throat singing sounds that I have developed. A bass clarinet in my hands is just as much a spirit mask for the voice as it is a musical instrument in its own right. I sing through the instrument and it filters and modifies and amplifies the sounds I want to make. Certainly there is much precedent for this, whether it's Albert Ayler or Peter Brötzmann and the

caveman

whole free jazz spirit music legacy, or African secret societies using voice masking in ritual contexts."

De Dionyso's latest release sees him moving closer than ever to that spirit of free jazz. *Gigantomachia* is the debut CD by his quartet The Naked Future, featuring pianist Thollem McDonas, drummer John Niekrasz and double bassist Gregg Skloff. Released on the recently resurrected ESP-Disk, the album takes 1960s Fire Music as a starting point but, claims de Dionyso, aims to give it 21st century relevance. "We recorded on 8/8/08, on the opening of the Olympic Games in Beijing, during those last months of the Bush administration and all the kinds of talk going around," he recalls, adding, "I don't need to talk about politics because it's all there in the music. Anyone can hear it – the uncertainty of where the world is headed, it's all in there." The album is a document of the first physical meeting between the four musicians, since which time they've continued to function as a working unit, with the addition of Ben Kates on saxophones. "In the live shows we've done recently," says de Dionyso, "we're focusing on those cross tones created when two wind instruments play sustained high pitches at very slight microtonal intervals and revelling in the physical sensation of feeling that specific kind of sound vibrating in the body, producing a kind of ecstatic, euphoric feeling in both the musicians and the audience. We're of a much more cohesive group-mind than we were when we did the recording, so our next venture into a studio should prove to be quite promising."

Running parallel to all this is de Dionyso's ongoing collaboration with dancer Malinda Allen – also called *I See Beyond The Black Sun*. "It's the same title as the last solo album," he explains, "because I conceive of the music on that album as not just a record but a body of work involving the music, the paintings on the cover, and the dance/theatre/movement as expressed by Malinda in performance. It's the most ambitious piece I've ever been involved with because it will always be a work in progress with no final destination. We're performing a piece of sound and dance that changes drastically within each performance according to the specifics of time and space. So much of what is considered avant garde music by others seems to me to be all about just pushing people away, being challenging to no end, weird for the sake of being weird or just hurting people's ears.

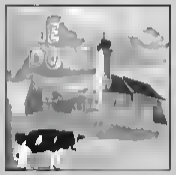
"That's been done," he concludes. "It's old hat and it doesn't speak to me. I want our music to draw people in to deeper states of reflection, to communicate information about sound, colour, planetary movements, DNA and the etheric bodies that surround us. This music might seem unfamiliar but it should feel inviting and energising. It should warm the heart and connect us to what it means to be human." ☐ The Naked Future's *Gigantomachia* is out now on ESP-Disk

Lucinda Roanoke

Music for tha anquiring mind and tha passaonate haart

LEO RECORDS NEW RELEASES

CD LR 522
JOËLLE LÉANDRE / AKOSH S
KOR



ACD LR 523
THE DORF

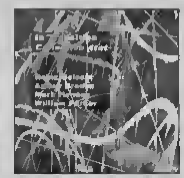
CD LR 524
LENA SEDYKH
MAGIC LETTERS

CD LR 525
CARL LUDWIG HÜBSCH S
Longrun Development of the Universe
THE UNIVERSE IS A DISK

CD LR 526 *ST FIN BARRE S*
Mark O Leary Stale Storlokken,
Stein Inge Braekhus

CD LR 527
MCO & SAINKHO
PORTRAIT OF AN IDEALIST

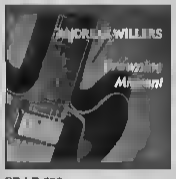
CD LR 528 *LIVE AT NYA P*
ERSPEKTIV FESTIVALS
2004 2007
MARILYN CRISPELL
Quartet / Quintet



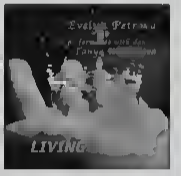
CD LR 529 *IN TRANSITION*
COLLECTIVE 4TET
Heinz Geisser / Arthur Brooks
Mark Hennen / William Parker

CD LR 530
SZILARD MEZEI
WIND QUARTET

CD LR 531 LAPSLAP SCRATCH
11 Improvisations for instruments
and live electronics



CD LR 532
ANDREAS WILLERS
DROWNING MIGRANT



CD LR 533
EVELYN PETROVA
LIVING WATER
Live performance with dancer
Tanya Khaba ova

CD LR 534
VYACHESLAV GUYVORONSKY
INTERVENTIONS

CD LR 535
JOELLE LEANDRE /
WILLIAM PARKER

CD LR 538
PAINTING ON WOOD
STEFANO LUIGI MANGIA featuring
Gianni Lenoci

Distributed by **Discovery Records**
Nursteed Road Devizes Wiltshire SN10 3DY
Mailorder directly from **Leo Records** 18 Woodland Avenue Kingskerswell Newton Abbot
TQ12 5BB fax 01803 872 167 e-mail leorecords@blueyonder.co.uk www.leorecords.com

Ultramarine
records

www.ultramarinerecords.com

The Right Moves
"The End of the Empire"
CD
OUT NOW

UPCOMING RELEASES

Amolvacy
"A La Lu La"
LP
featuring members of
No-Neck Blues Band and Volcano the Bear

Chris Forsyth
&
Shawn Edward Hansen
"Dirty Pool"
LP

in o ultramarinerecords.com

DIRTY PROJECTORS BITTE ORCA

"Thara s a world of cross-refarancas in Dirty Projectors' music: stuttering modal riffs from Mali tha maandaring matodias of opara or modarn music thaatar pygmy antiphonal vocals Captain Baafhaart Zimbabwaan and Congolasa rock King Crimson Talking Haads" NEW YORK TIMES

LP / CD / CASSETTE / DIGITAL 08 06 2009

DOMINORECORDS.COM DIRTYPROJECTORS.NET

Graham Lambkin

By Nick Cain

"I've always enjoyed propagating errors and mistakes," Graham Lambkin explains. He's talking about his recent solo work, but his comment is just as applicable to his former group The Shadow Ring, "partly because we were so hopeless and we couldn't get simple stuff done," as he puts it. "But after a while it dawned on me that this gave me something that other people perhaps don't have. So I worked with it as a strength rather than trying to fight against it. And as I've matured as a musician, if I have to use that word, I think I've been able to put myself in situations where these interesting accidents are more likely to happen."

A willingness to embrace the accidental typifies Lambkin's work, from 2008's *The Breadwinner* duo with Jason Lescalleet and his 2007 solo album *Salmon Run*, all the way back to the early days of The Shadow Ring, who formed in Folkestone, Kent in 1993. He recently released *Life Review (1993–2003)*, a double CD retrospective of the group's decade-long existence. The three releases constitute something of a renaissance for Lambkin, who has maintained a low profile since The Shadow Ring's demise. He's at work on a follow-up to *Salmon Run* and a second album with Lescalleet, and has long-term plans to reissue all eight Shadow Ring albums.

Unloved in their homeland, The Shadow Ring were championed by the Siltbreeze and Swill Radio labels in the US, where they toured twice. Their first four albums wore their imperfections with inverted pride, crafting repetitions extracted from acoustic guitar and drums into a ragged, detuned DIY clatter, on which Tim Goss's abrasive electronics superimposed themselves awkwardly. Lyrics, declaimed by Darren Harris in an affectless monotone, skewed tales of domestic banality into surreal metaphors. After 1997's *Hold Onto ID*, the group decided to "take our rigid signature sound and pull it apart," Lambkin recalls. "We stopped taking ourselves so seriously. The process of designing the song became less important than how that song was recorded, and what we could do to it after the fact."

The *Lighthouse* double LP followed, a concept album about a fictional couple running the last lighthouse in the UK, episodes in whose lives were relayed as fragmented vignettes. "I used to give Darren the lyrics to read printed out. I began to write them in a way that he would have difficulty understanding what I'd written. Often he'd get it completely wrong, but it would add a weird element to the lyric which I couldn't have thought of on my own. We did a lot of stuff like that, just to try to encourage as much stuff to go wrong as possible." By their final album *I'm Some Songs*, instrumentation had fallen away altogether. Floating tones mesh with room hiss, generating unsettling ambiences, with vocals slackened to a textural slur. The album overlaps with Lambkin's 2003 solo debut *Poem For Voice And Tape*, which similarly deals with slowed down vocals, juxtaposed with recordings of rainfall.

Lambkin has a parallel career as a visual artist – his drawings adorn several Shadow Ring releases – and it was while working on a series of self-portraits that he chanced on a new process for his solo work, a eureka moment documented on "The Currency Of Dreams", one of *Salmon Run*'s most striking tracks. "You can hear a digital camera because I was in the habit of recording myself taking photos of myself," he explains. "What you hear is what was going on in the room. I was taking pictures of myself and I thought it was funny, and I just happened to be listening to a piece of classical music at the time. When I played the tape back it was a breakthrough thing for me. It became apparent that the sounds surrounding the sound were as important as the sound itself. I like the idea of it. It just doesn't seem logical to allow all those things in when most people try their hardest to get rid of it."

Built from recordings of domestic and public spaces, *Salmon Run*'s compositions mingle familiar and unidentifiable sounds. Lambkin is heard breathing heavily and guffawing as classical music plays, a method he likens to Austrian artist Arnulf Rainer's technique of overpainting an existing artwork. "When I saw his work it got me thinking about when I was listening to these pieces of classical music which I love, how I could put myself within them, how I could make them part of my work. Almost like trespassing on someone else's property, but in a respectful way."

Like *Salmon Run*, *The Breadwinner* is a heavily coded exploration of the psychological properties of shared spaces. The album was largely recorded in Lambkin's house in Poughkeepsie, upstate New York (he relocated to the US in 1998). "On the opening track, the creaking you hear was me on my chair by the computer, just rocking slowly. And then you start to hear voices and children in the background – that was my kids, just stirring," he laughs. "That was unintentional but it adds something to the piece that we couldn't consciously have thought of, so we decided to leave it in."

As intimate as they are opaque, the two albums generate layers of shading from the relationships between sounds and both the physical space in which they occur, and the emotion embedded in the human activity they connote. "Because a lot of it is stuff that's happening around me, it puts the music at a distance from the listener," Lambkin ponders. "Maybe it's something that only I can get past because I recognise all the sounds. Maybe if you don't recognise them it's a bit more puzzling, why they're all there. It's not an obstacle, I'm not trying to put people off. It's like looking at something through a window – there's something there that you can see but you can't completely put your hand on it." ☐ The Shadow Ring's *Life Review (1993–2003)* is out now on Kye, Graham Lambkin & Jason Lescalleet's *The Breadwinner* is out now on Erstwhile.

Happy accidents

Adria Hayes

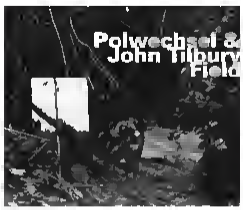
www.hathut.com www.hathut.com www.hathut.com hat www.hathut.com

hatOLOGY 658*

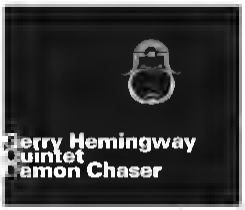
hatOLOGY 662*

hatOLOGY 668*

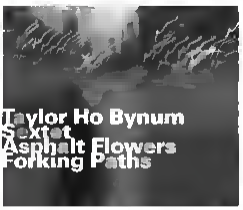
hatOLOGY 670



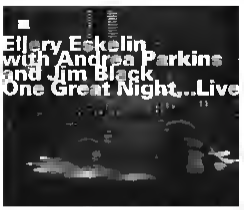
hatOLOGY 672*



hatOLOGY 673*



hatOLOGY 675



hatOLOGY 683*

* New releases

IMPORTANT RECORDS
NEWS.APPAREL.MP3.CATS.ON THE WEB.WWW.IMPORTANTRECORDS.COM

soon: Cave Rail Acid Mothers Temple Decah H.N.A.S Cluster Eleh
Dominique Leone Zurich Guano Padano Pauline Oliveros Eliane Radigue

RISIL
Non Meters Volume One CD/2xLP
RISIL is a collective of musicians that are all somehow connected to each other in some form or fashion. It is a memorial group includes Ga Hanna Harlow (Preluxe 72/Bavath & Bavatlee) Zach Hill (Hella) Tycondi Braxton (Battles) John McEntire (Tortoise) Alejandra Deheza (School Of Seven Bells) Eve Puyuelo Maes (Sixth & Seve en). The project started as a chance for a large number of people to freely collaborate without a set goal for the end result or achieving a certain sound

ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE & M.P.U.F.O.
Dark Side of The Black Moon What Planet are we on? CD/2xLP
Brand new full length remixes from The Acid Mothers Temple And The Melting Paraiso U.F.O. Progg psych sounds mixing Pink Floyd with fuzzy wah guitars and cosmic sounds. Focused mixing, super totally recording and packaging designed by Belden Hunt.

TONGUES OF MOUNT MERU
THE OCEAN OF MILK LP
Limited edition of 300 copies. Screen printed heavy duty jackets. Lasse Marhaug & Jon Wesseltoft (Thorns) have created two sides of beautiful minimalist drone; quite a departure for both artists.

OM
Conference Live LP
Recorded live multi-track remote audio at their 2008 performance at New York and mastered by Carl Saff the audio feel is strikingly clear and full. On this night Om performed their seminal album Conference of the Birds live in its entirety. Newly invoked energy resonates in the sound of the band

CAVE
Psychic Psummer CD/LP
A dream come true... a full length shuttle beam from Chicago's Cave. Major momentum expertly crafted and embracing maximum minimalism repeater. Can cloud bounce & full on heavy chant. Like driving a train full speed off a cliff only to discover that the train can fly and you'll live forever if you stay inside

CAVE
Made In Malaysia 7"
Limited edition of 500 copies. The first 200 on mixed colors
Made In Malaysia is the single off of Cave's brand new full length titled Psychic Summer. The B-side 'Boneyard' was pulled from the Psychic Summer recording sessions and is exclusive to this 7" release.

BARDO POND
Gazing At Shilla LP
Limited edition pressing of 1000 copies on vinyl heavy enough to hold some of Bardo Pond's maniest jams. This is the first of four vinyl only Bardo related releases coming out simultaneously on Important Records.

Chewing a mouthful of qat, **Robert Carroll** is entranced by the ancient desert musics of Yemen's capital city

Sana'a

A Yemeni wedding dance

Cutting through crisp, rarefied air, the crackle from a distant minaret swells to a chorus of calls to prayer heralding dusk in the Yemeni capital of Sana'a. This cry has rung out over the rooftops for centuries, but it is the sound of just one epoch in the history of this ancient city.

Sana'a is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, dating back to the Sabaean dynasty – biblical Sheba – from the sixth century BC. Some buildings in the old city are over 1000 years old. Most have stood for at least 300 years. It is unlike anywhere else in the world.

Looking out from the roof of the Taj Talha Hotel, six storeys high, the city seems to be made of cake. As the light fades, the tall, crooked structures of stone, brick and mud blocks, decorated with geometric shapes and horizontal bands of gypsum, give the impression of being "baked, not built", as one writer put it. This architectural feast was declared a World Heritage Site in 1986.

Musically, the city is just as distinctive. In the 1940s, the ruler, Imam Yahya, banned music in Yemen for some years, but this blip did little to upset the country's unique musical traditions. Sana'a is a city of sonic contrasts: new and old, loud and tranquil. Amid the hustle and bustle of the new city, the recorded voices of singers blare from huge, horn-shaped speakers strapped to car roofs. Meanwhile, in the labyrinthine streets of the old city, the throaty murmur of an oud, the stringed, lyre-like instrument so prominent in Islamic music, rises above the shouts of playing children.

Words are very important in Yemeni music. Indeed, the supreme value of the poetic word is at the heart of much of it. Homayni, a traditional form of sung poetry, originated in Sana'a in the 14th century. Over the years it has become synonymous with singing in the capital. It consists of intricate word patterns set to four and seven-beat rhythms woven into remarkably beautiful forms. Usually, the singer plays a qanbus, a small instrument with four strings, which is indigenous to Yemen. Though rarer nowadays, the singer may instead use for accompaniment a copper tray called a sahn mimiyeh, whose shimmering chimes would not be out of place in Indonesia. In 2003, Unesco declared the traditional songs of Sana'a to be a "Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity".

Before coming to Yemen, records from the Institut Du Monde Arabe formed the basis of my knowledge of music from the area. One remarkable song on *Le Chant De Sana'a* by the late Ahmed Ushaysh encapsulates the Sana'an sound, which has not changed for centuries.

Ironically, some of the best places to hear the country's traditional music performed are beyond its borders. The lack of a developed music industry has sent many talented musicians abroad. Two of Yemen's most famous performers, Ahmed Fathey and Osama al Attar, live in the United Arab Emirates. Yemen's far-reaching diaspora has also led to surprising musical fusions. For example, the Yemeni community in Cardiff, one of the oldest Arab communities in Europe, dating back to the 1860s, has had an important influence on Welsh folk music.

Most music in Sana'a comes from dusty cassettes sold on the street side. Journeying to the remote clifftop village of Kawkaban in a battered Toyota Landcruiser, a fierce oud riff breaks out from the stereo hiss. It is a classic Yemeni set-up. A cracked compact disc dangles like a talisman from the rear view mirror. Large wooden speakers draped in grubby sheepskin are balanced on the dashboard. A chunky metal amplifier lies in the foot well. The music – a tape by the singer Mohammad al-Harithi – mingles with the incessant honk of horns.

My driver, Abdul Aziz, taps out the rhythm on his fur-covered steering wheel as he zigzags through the traffic. He tries to sing along but his right cheek is bulging, jammed full of qat. Many Yemenis spend their afternoon chewing the leaves of the shrub catha edulis, a mild stimulant. Chewing qat is almost a national pastime. He picks out some leaves from a blue plastic bag and gives them to me. After 30 minutes, I have collected a ball of semi-masticated, bitter-tasting foliage in my cheek. The effect is minimal. I feel a bit more talkative perhaps, but my mouth is dry and sore from sharp twigs. It is hard to believe nearly three quarters of the country's fertile land is now devoted to growing this stuff.

As we drive on through the stony desert, a brisk and intricate oud solo ends and the singing starts again. It is the perfect soundtrack, says Abdul Aziz, to an afternoon chewing qat. He goes on to describe a typical session. How music and qat are intertwined. How the gathering becomes more and more animated until the mood peaks in the 'hour of Solomon' – the hour before dusk – when the atmosphere mellows with the setting sun and the group break up for the call to prayer. Abdul Aziz turns up the volume and shouts out a promise to take me along to one.

The next day is Friday – wedding day in Sana'a. We climb the stairs to the upper levels of a house in the old city. The room is filled with cushions and men sitting around chewing qat. They are wearing what most men in Yemen wear: pinstriped suit jackets over long white shirts, curved daggers tucked into embroidered belts, and hand-woven scarves draped over the shoulder. Near the middle of the room, a man is playing an oud and singing. We sit down and my jaw quickly settles into a pattern of rhythmical leaf chewing. The oud slowly builds through hypnotic repetitions. The singing grows louder, a sustained and high-pitched voice, drowning out the jabbering of the crowd. Little by little, the playing becomes more frenetic. At one point a group of men starts to dance, brandishing their unsheathed daggers high in the air. Slowly shadow fills the room. Daylight shrinks to the tremor of an oud string. The men get up to leave as the call to prayer rings out once more. ☐ Mohammad al-Harithi's *L'Heure De Salomon* and Hasan Al-Ayami & Ahmed Ushaysh's *Le Chant De Sana'a* are both available on Institut Du Monde Arabe.

© Abbie Enock/Corbis

Soulful and kaleidoscopic ever-shifting mantra-cycles from this 12-string avatar, now orchestrating with strings, wind, vocals, piano to stunning effect. Swirling overtones and a million points of light.

Deluxe Digi CD·LP(w/CD Insert)·MP3

Distributed by Revolver USA and Ferte UK

MONO
HYMN TO THE IMMORTAL WIND CD / 2xLP

FRIDGE
EARLY OUTPUT 1998-1999 CD

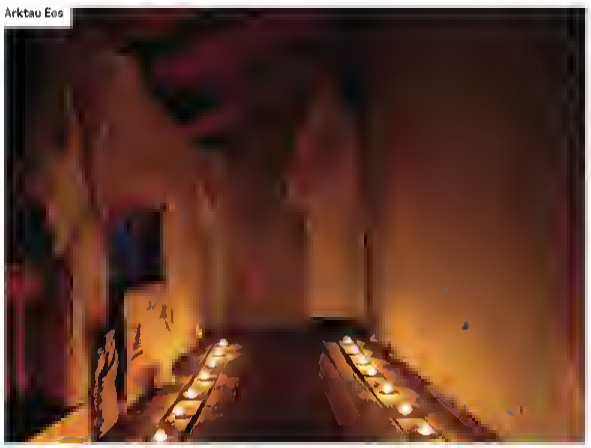
GRAILS
ACID RAIN DVD

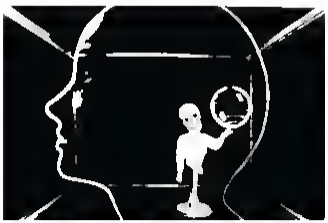
BELLINI
THE PRECIOUS PRIZE OF GRAVITY LP+CD

TEMPORARY RESIDENCE LTD.
NEW YORK - USA – EARTH

LOST ARTIFACTS OF THE LATE 20th CENTURY

Over 20 years of recordings now available
Listen at www.afterdaysmedia.com and iTunes


Arktau Eos


Still from Harry Smith's *Heaven And Earth Magic* (1957–62)

Film maker and curator Raymond Salvatore Harmon reveals the occult thinking behind his

Equinox Festival

of music, magic and ritual, which takes place in London this month. By **Jack Sargeant**

"If you look at the scope of any mystical tradition from anywhere in the history of man, the fundamental element that underlies everything is the creative act," declares Equinox Festival director Raymond Salvatore Harmon. "I think that art is really magic, anything that is being created is an act of magic. I believe that is what magic is more than anything else: the act of creation." Taking its name from Aleister Crowley's esoteric journal, whose mission statement was The "Method of Science The Aim of Religion", Equinox does not refer to the seasonal occurrence at which night and day are the same length, but to the Equinox of the Gods. Harmon describes it as the "point at which the threshold of mythology is crossed over into contemporary society". This liminal moment has informed the work of many of the artists participating in the three day festival he has curated, which takes place this month in London.

With a programme that includes the likes of John Zorn, z'ev and The Threshold HouseBoys Choir, it brings together, says Harmon, "a pretty big cast of very interesting musicians whose work is heavily inspired by mysticism and the occult and various spiritual traditions". Indeed, all the participants share a degree of involvement in esoteric traditions. Percussionist z'ev's book *Rhythmajik* is a key text examining the relationship between sound and Qabala. Peter Christopherson's work across Throbbing Gristle, Psychic TV and Coil has always engaged with various forms of magical thought, Zorn's interest in magic has informed many of his compositions. Now the Equinox Festival affords him the opportunity to present a solo performance within a directly magical and spiritual context. "John [Zorn] was at the top of the list," states Harmon. "It [was] perfectly timed, because he has this book coming out later this year, *Arcana 4*, which is all about mysticism and its relation to music. His enthusiasm for the festival is absolutely astounding. He has helped us immensely, I am very thankful to have him on board." Also featured are the reformed Comus (see page 34), whose influence can be felt on Current 93, right through to the likes of Joanna Newsom. "We asked them and they said this is exactly the sort of thing they want to get involved with, so they came on," adds Harmon.

Australia's Noko and Finland's Arktau Eos occupy a zone where sounds and visuals exist and function within a ceremonial context. Similarly, Harmon's experimental films, which are screening during the festival alongside those of Harry Smith and Maya Deren, are meditative works that are manifestations and adaptations of specific rituals. Asked about the nature of the relationship between ritual and performance, Harmon cites the example of Arktau Eos. "They present themselves as a band in that they release CDs," he explains, "but their performances are really like watching somebody's ritual. The pieces that they do are like seeing somebody perform a private magical ritual, and in that context they are perfect for what we do." Harmon describes Arktau Eos as possessing a shamanistic quality, but is careful to point out that he is only offering his interpretation of their work. It represents, he suggests, "a halfway point between the Arctic Circle shamanic tradition and contemporary Western esotericism".

Embracing such syncretism is a key aspect of those contemporary occult scholars who frequently engage with multiple traditions. Noko's ritual draws inspiration from sources as diverse as Haitian voodoo, medieval grimoires and Enochian magic. His work is rarely staged for the public, usually each piece is developed over months of esoteric research and performed only within a personal ceremonial context for an invited audience.

At the Equinox Festival, says Harmon, "We are trying to create a cross-fertilisation between ideas, from Western esotericism, from traditional Tantra, from contemporary conscious expansion, Brazilian Ayahuasca rituals, how these things interact, how they play across each other. And the audience gets caught up in the middle of all that. We are creating an environment for these people to create in with the audience paying witness to that creation."

For Harmon such cross-fertilisation is essential. "If we had a whole bill of the same thing, you are going to come out with the same thing the other side of the three days. Whereas we've created a programme that allows for disparate, often contradictory cultures to sort of mush together and overlap." Combining different philosophies and esoteric traditions allows information to be shared and ideas to be explored. An essential aim of the festival is "being able to create a space where things that sort of clash can come together in one place, influencing each other, forcing an openmindedness on everyone, giving everyone the chance to experience what is happening on the other side of the fence."

"From the perspective of the festival," he concludes, "our intent is to present the public with a personal insight into an actual ritual, so that you get to be privy to the actual experience of a ritual. I think that in the shape of the work of Noko, Arktau and my work, we are all people trying to bring magical ritual into the public sphere. To make it less of a *behind closed doors* event, not a spectacle in the sense of the musical performance aspect, but more of a participatory event, in that the audience's reaction to the event fuels what actually is occurring." □

The Equinox Festival runs at London's Camden Centre and Conway Hall, 12–14 June – see Out There
www.equinoxfestival.org

JOHN WIESE

CIRCLE SNARE

New Releases Out Now:

JOHN WIESE 'Circle Snare' CD

NOVELLER 'Paint on the Shadows' LP
ZAIMPH 'Oeath Blooming Pleasure' LP
THE RITA/CARLOS GIFFONI 'Two on a Match' 2xLP
ONE OHTRIX POINT NEVER LP

Distributed by Darla, Cargo, A-Musik, Metamkine & Volcanic Tongue

NO FUN PRODUCTIONS

Jennifer Walshe

XXX_LIVE_NUDE_GIRLS!!!

DVD release May 27th
at Chelsea Art Museum,
New York City

MERE

Purchase at www.mererecords.com or Spotify, iTunes etc.
Distributed by musikkoperatorene.no

Tom Hamilton

Local Customs

This tovely work for small ensemble in its exploration of music theory leads to sound combinations that are at once unsettling and yet somehow familiar it should be listened to as a group of artifacts of little-known origins modified through new transfor mations into something further unexplained

"Blue" Gene Tyranny

The Somewhere Songs
The Invention of Memory

Thomas Buckner voice

"The Somewhere Songs / The Invention Of Memory has to be very highly recommended "
Massimo Ricci Bagatellen

mutablemusic

109 West 27th Street 8th floor New York NY 10001 Phone 212 627 0990
Fax 212 627 5504 info@mutablemusic.com
www.mutablemusic.com

GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL

SPRING/SUMMER UPDATE

SCHOOL OF SEVEN BELLS
ON TOUR THIS SUMMER, SIGNED TO FULL TIME HOBBY IN THE UK

DEASTRO
DETROIT WUNDERKIND UNVEILS MOONDAGGER LP

MICHNA
LIVE BAND SET IN UK/EU FOR GHOSTLY 1D YEAR TOUR

DABRYE
IN THE STUDIO.

LUSINE
NEW ALBUM A CERTAIN DISTANCE + DATES AT SONAR/MUTEK

THE SIGHT BELOW
GLIDER 2XLP WITH REMIXES BY BIOSPHERE, ELUVIUM, ETC

GHOSTLY.COM | THEGHOSTLYSTORE.COM

Invisible Jukebox

Each month we play a musician a series of records which they are asked to identify and comment on – with no prior knowledge of what they are about to hear. This month it's the turn of

Andy Moor

Tested by **Mike Barnes**. Photography by **Danielle van Ark**

Formed in 1979, The Ex soon became established as Holland's foremost punk group. But by 1990, when English guitarist Andy Moor was invited to join them from The Dog Faced Hermans, they were already transcending punk's limitations by collaborating with the likes of improvising cellist Tom Cora. Moor's music has since become steadily more experimental and eclectic. By 1995, he was playing improvised guitar sets in a duo with Ex guitarist Terrie Hessels (aka Terrie Ex), and in 1996 he formed Kletka Red, a vehicle for idiosyncratic takes on Russian music, Greek rembetika and klezmer styles, with Tony Buck of The Necks on drums, double bass player Joe Williamson and vocalist Leonid Soybelman.

Other units in which Moor currently plays include Décade (with French sound poet Anne-James Chaton and alva noto aka Carsten Nicolai), Lean Left (with Terrie Ex, saxophonist Ken Vandermark and Paal Nilssen-Love on drums), Thermal (with saxophonist John Butcher and Thomas Lehn on electronics), and in a duo with Brooklyn's DJ /rupture. He has also worked with musicians as diverse as composer and electronics improvisor Yannis Kyriakides, Kaffe Matthews and ex-Electrelane guitarist Mia Clarke, as well as writing music for film, dance and theatre.

Moor formed the Unsounds record label with Kyriakides and Isabelle Vigier in 2002, and he features on two albums released by the label this month. *Everything But The Beginning* – in a duo with Colin McLean on electronics and live sampling – and *Rembetika*, in which he and Kyriakides rework Greek underworld songs electronically with guitar and live sampling.

30 years and more than 20 albums down the line, The Ex are still very much a going concern. Their recent activities have included a collaboration with veteran Ethiopian saxophonist Getatchew Mekuria, involving a series of concerts in Ethiopia, Europe and the USA, and an album, *Moa Anbessa*, released in 2007.

The Jukebox took place at King's Place, London, the morning before an Unsounds showcase concert in which Moor was taking part.

The Pop Group
"We Are All Prostitutes"
Rough Trade 7" (1980)

Yes! [Laughs] This is a band I regret having never seen. By the time I discovered them they had split up. Terrie [Ex] said that The Ex played one of their very first gigs with The Pop Group. He said it was amazing, like some sort of black magic experience. For me they were scary and had some weird magic around them. I never understood why The Pop Group and Rip, Rig & Panic, Pigbag – all these bands from Bristol – didn't have a bigger influence. Everyone talks about Manchester and Liverpool, but I thought the stuff that came out of Bristol was really the best pop music at the time – and more recently, Tricky and Portishead. I like this because it's catchy dance music, but with a sort of weird, free, avant garde jazz mixed in. Didn't [Dutch cellist] Tristan Honsinger play with them?

Yes – on this track, in fact.

He's one of my favourite cello players. It's a great song and it doesn't sound old.

Mark Stewart once said they didn't choose the name ironically, more that they wanted to be the ultimate pop group, subverting from within the mainstream. How does this differ from the way The Ex present politics? Some people still call you 'anarcho-punk'.

When The Ex first started, they were overtly political, and they still are in a way. They were seen as one of Holland's first punk bands. By the time they released [1986 EP] *1936 – The Spanish Revolution*, they started to get labelled as anarcho-punk. But for me The Ex were never ever anarcho-punk. I think they were influenced by Crass in the beginning, but really The Ex are openminded and humanistic rather than anarcho. We didn't ever play with Crass, but we played with Chumbawamba and we really felt like some kind of kindred spirits, but for us the music was totally different. With Chumbawamba, I think they were really trying to get their political message across and used music as a medium; for us we were trying to get our music across and had political words. That's what was great about The Pop Group: they had really hardcore political lyrics but it sounded like fun. And the music was as anarchic as the message.

Skeleton Crew
"Factory Song"
From *Learn To Talk* (Rift) 1984

I've not heard it before. It sounds like something from the 80s.

It's from 1984.

The guitar reminds me a bit of the Durutti Column guy, Vini Reilly. [Cello comes in] Aha! It's not Tom Cora, is it? Is it the stuff he did with Fred Frith – Skeleton Crew? It's funny, I met Tom just after this stuff but I never heard it. You can recognise Tom's playing immediately. He had such an individual style.

Did hearing The Pop Group play with a free jazz cellist have any effect on The Ex's decision to collaborate with Tom Cora in 1990?

I think it was actually Tom's idea. It was just before I joined. He had seen them in CBGB's. From what I remember, he contacted us to do a concert together and that grew. But I think the thing of being open to play with these musicians came not necessarily from The Pop Group, but from watching improvised music in Amsterdam, in the Bimhuis. We've always been open to playing with different musicians. From when we started, we were playing with horns already, and we were listening to jazz and African music, and when we saw all these acoustic jazz musicians in the Bimhuis, some really making their own stuff that didn't sound like jazz to us at all, like Tristan Honsinger, [saxophonist] Ab Baars, [trombonist] Wolter Wierbos, [drummer] Han Bennink, [double bass player] Wilbert de Joode. That really inspired us. Around that time Tom Cora invited us to play. It was a nice meeting because I was really into Eastern European music, and we discovered that Tom was really into Eastern European and Hungarian music, so we threw loads of stuff into the pot. It was a great mixture.

How did playing with Cora affect your playing?

I think we influenced each other a lot. We had to play quieter for a start, which took a bit of time to get used to – half the volume, or it would have been impossible for him with the cello. He added strong melody to a band that was quite rhythmic and discordant, so it encouraged us to play a bit more melodically. I learned to listen more to the music that was happening. We had problems, also, because we have our own way of doing things, of making music, and we didn't always see eye to eye, but we found a way to work. It must have been quite something for him to deal with this loud chaotic band. I could see he struggled with it but he also loved it. That's great, that tension.

Sonic Youth
"She Is Not Alone"
From *Sonic Youth* (Neutral) 1982

I like the guitar. Sounds like my guitar. Sounds like our rehearsals. I didn't mean that negatively – this is how we make our songs. [Thurston Moore's voice comes in] Sonic Youth? I didn't want to say that, because the drumming didn't sound like Sonic Youth – it almost has an African style.

This song is from their first EP.

Andy Nixon at home in Amsterdam, April 2009

It's great. So, the guitar doesn't sound like me, I sound like him. I don't know if it's Thurston or Lee [Ranaldo] who always does the stuff playing behind the bridge of the guitar. The first time I saw them do that I decided, OK, I'm going to do that as well – I hope they don't mind. My favourite period is around *EVOL* [1986]. I first saw them in Glasgow when we had just started practising with The Dog Faced Hermans. I was shocked when I saw them, because they were hitting their guitars with drumsticks and I'd never seen a band do that before. It was great. And for me that record is the perfect balance of experimental music and catchy, listenable pop songs. They had five or six guitars, some tuned to just one note, and I thought that was such a great idea. I also started messing about with tunings after seeing them. I had to do it on one guitar, so I really learnt how to tune my guitar fast.

Anonymous
"Hongahonga Lele"
From Various *Tanzanian Instruments* (SWP) 1950
This could be Tanzania, Uganda... it's definitely from East Africa. Wow. It sounds to me like it's part of the Hugh Tracey recordings. Tracey worked for BBC Africa, so he could get access to good microphones. He made long journeys through East Africa with his truck and a recording engineer. They originally came out in the 1960s and then were reissued on SWP by this half-English, half-Zambian drummer who lives in Holland called Michael Baird. This sounds like it comes from *Tanzanian Instruments*.
That's the one.
I recognised this as Tanzanian because of the rhythm, not the instruments. It's had such a big influence on us – we've listened to it a lot. Western African music has been exported in the last 30 years – everyone knows stuff from Mali – but East African music is still quite unknown, except for the Ethiopian stuff. It's nice because Baird divided it into tribes, where Hugh Tracey divided it more into African strings, African drums. Most of that music has disappeared. In somewhere like Uganda, either the instruments have been destroyed or the tribespeople have been killed.

Alèmayèhu Eshèté
"Ete Hoy"
From Various *Ethiopiques 3: Golden Years Of Modern Ethiopian Music* (Buda Musique) 1998. Rec c 1972
Tilahun Gessesse? No, no, it could be Alemayèhu. He's the James Brown of Ethiopian pop music. This is from the 1970s. They'd heard James Brown and they were really trying to get this kind of funky sound, so you have these intros where it sounds like a soul band or Motown, but when the singing comes in it just sounds really Ethiopian again. The timing of Ethiopian singing is so unusual. This music has had a big impact on us.
Your 2007 album with Ethiopian sax player Getatchew Mekuria, *Moa Anbessa*, worked really well, but on paper it seemed a very odd mixture. Anarcho-punk and Ethiopian music [laughs].
How did The Ex's gigs in Ethiopia happen?
There are a lot of Ethiopians in Amsterdam, and we eat in the restaurants there, and one of them who had seen The Ex said to Terrie, 'You should try and play in Ethiopia.' We asked him if he was serious and he said, 'Yeah, just go over there and try and organise it.' Me and Terrie went over in 2001 and started asking people, but we really had to turn up and organise on the fly – there were no contracts or anything. So we turned up with the whole band and the van, and they had just started making these amazing converters that converted car batteries to 240 volts AC so you could plug the whole band into the battery of a car. We ended up playing in a theatre, in a barn, in a police community hall – it really depended on what the chief of police of each town thought would work. We'd usually play for free about five or six in the evening when everyone was coming out of work, so one time we got about 3000 people as we were playing in a square. We weren't playing with Getatchew then, we were The Ex with Han Bennink drumming, so we did a mixture of Ethiopian hits from the 1970s and some Ex songs.
That must have been a bizarre experience, to have a white rock group coming to play their songs.
Yeah, yeah. I think it was probably quite amusing for them. Sometimes Ethiopians would come up to us and go, 'What are you doing here?' We would say, 'We've come here to play music.' And they'd say, 'You don't have to – we have our own music.' I thought that was so great. We couldn't say anything except, 'Yeah, you're right, actually.' The last time we played, we played with Getatchew, which was really good. Ethiopia had this dark period of communism in the 1980s and 90s with [Marxist-Leninist military junta] the Derg. So many musicians of the 70s and 80s either died or went to America, or just stopped playing. So he faded out for a while and it was only in the last five or six years that he's had a comeback. For us, it's not a strange combination at all: we've been listening to the music for 12–15 years, so it's really in our system, and we know it on that level. We really tried to make something where we would meet halfway, and I was amazed how open he was to it. And it was his idea, that's the great thing about it. He saw us playing live and said, 'I want The Ex to be my band.'

Misha Mengelberg/Steve Lacy/George Lawis/ Ernst Reijseger/Han Bennink
"Dutch Masters"
From *Dutch Masters* (Soul Note) 1987
Is there going to be a guitar in this [laughs]? Could even be The ICP. It sounds like Dutch jazz. There's something about Dutch jazz. It sounds like Wolter Wierbos [on trombone], I think. Michael Moore on [saxophone] maybe? It's not Han playing drums?
It is, actually.
He's behaving very well. The piano could be Misha [Mengelberg]?
That's right... This sort of music was being made when you first moved to Holland. Were you into it?
Totally. When I first moved to Holland I didn't really know these guys. I'd listened to a bit of American free jazz, Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry. Terrie took me to the Bimhuis, and I got a complete education about the Dutch jazz scene in a couple of years. Han was always completely inspiring. I'd never seen a drummer play like that before. And I was so jealous. I wished I could do that on the guitar, be able to release that much energy on an instrument, physically, in all directions and still have such control. The great thing about Han is, he's still amazing. People say he's doing all the same tricks and I just think that's nonsense. Everyone has their tricks and everyone repeats themselves. It's much more to do with the spirit and the energy and the creativity. He still has the fire and enthusiasm of a child. This is really the most well-behaved I've ever heard him. He told me this story that he once put bits of paper inside his hi-hat and set them on fire, in China, so when you hit the hi-hat you get a puff of smoke. He nearly got arrested. He animates his music with brilliant theatre but it always stays within the musical realm. It never becomes some kind of cabaret gimmick. That's a skill.
Woiter's going to kill me when he hears I mistook him for George Lewis. Steve Lacy saw The Ex once and said that it was the music of the devil.

Roza Eskenazi
"Ime Prezakiaas" ("I'm A Smackhead")
From *Rembetiko: The Ottoman Legacy 1925–1937* (JSP) 2006. rec 1920s
Ah! It's rembetika, but who is it? It's either Marika Papagika or Rita Abadzi or... I've forgotten her name. Roza Eskenazi.
Yeah, yeah. She's great. My favourite is Rita Abadzi – she has a very honey coated voice.
The title here has been translated into modern parlance and comes out as "I'm A Smackhead".
[Laughs] That's a good one. But all the songs are about heroin, hash, tuberculosis, unrequited love, prison. It's all really sad and melancholy but it makes me happy when I listen to it. I can't really explain why. When I first met Yannis Kyriakides, the thing that really got us connected was that he also loves rembetika. He's from Cyprus so he also knew it really well, and we started exchanging rembetika CDs. It's my favourite music from that part of the world. They describe it as the blues from Greece, which is a bit of a cliche, but I think it's got incredibly catchy melodies as well, the old stuff from the 30s. It's all from these Greek refugees who were living in Turkey who had to come back to Greece because they were Christian. The Muslim Greeks stayed in Turkey. They arrived back at Piraeus, which is next to Athens and basically they were used to smoking a lot of hash in Turkey, so they set up refugee camps by the coast and carried on playing their music, which kind of went underground.

John Butcher
"Soft Logic"
From *The Geometry Of Sentiment* (Emanem) 2007
The best saxophone player in the world. When I first heard it, I thought it was some electronic drone. But that's what's amazing about John. This is when he does this stuff with the feedback, when he doesn't actually blow into the saxophone, he moves the bell nearer and further from the microphone and moves the keys as well. John came on tour with The Ex once, when we toured in Italy. It was so great to see him deal

with the Italian punk/squat scene. All these kids with punky haircuts were listening to John Butcher. And he totally captivated people, I think, because his level of concentration when he plays is just unbelievable. He is so aware of the space he is in, he works so much with the sound of the room. He adjusts his playing totally to what's happening in the space.

Is it music you like to listen to at home or more something you like to play live?

I like to listen to John, but in general I don't listen to much improvised music on CD. I like to see it happening. I also like to see the struggle when it's not going well and it's suddenly working again. That's so great, and how people solve problems. This DJ /rupture CD we did recently [*Patches*] came from four gigs which were completely improvised. It was hard work, really new for us both. I'd not worked with turntables, he'd never worked with a guitar, and you could really hear that struggle and sometimes it worked and sometimes it was just bad, so we thought, OK, let's *not* put the bad stuff on CD.

alva noto
"U_07"
From *unitxt* (Raster-Noton) 2008

Owl. There are some high frequencies that hurt there. Is this alva noto? Great, except for that really high frequency. But I like his stuff. It's so pure without being purist. Have you heard him live? [Vocals come in] Ah! It's Anne-James [Chaton]. Great.

He's reading out the contents of Carsten Nicolai's wallet.

It's one of his portraits. He just takes all the text that you have on you and reads it out. He's working on a series of 100 portraits. He has one of an astronaut. He invited the astronaut to give him everything he was carrying on him completely unprepared. He takes down all the text and reads it. It's like a code.

Has he done one of you?

Yes, it's called "The Guitarist" [laughs]. He's got my credit card numbers on there, bank code, everything. He's amazing. We have a trio together with Carsten and Anne-James. We are from such different musical worlds, but we are both really connected, more to do with our approach to sound, almost, than to music. He uses these very pure sinewaves in his sound and I use a very simple analogue guitar with no effects and I think that somehow it works. I think he was expecting me to come with 11 pedals and when he saw that I didn't have any pedals, he thought, Ah!, and somehow it gelled. And Anne-James is in the middle reading his very focused poetry.

Does Chéton take a similar approach in the trio?

It's called Decade and it's quite a few portraits combined somehow. He doesn't like to explain his work. He seems to be concerned with the world at large and intimate details at the same time. People carry all that stuff, and in itself it's impersonal and not particularly revealing, but it's a code revealing something about their life. On our CD he has this piece where he took the Stock Exchange, reads out the name of the company and instead of reading out the figure, he says, 'You are less rich' or 'You are more rich'. That's all it's about in the end, and that makes it absurd and ridiculous as well.

The Fall
"Container Drivers"
From *Grotesque (After The Gramme)* (Rough Trade) 1980

Yeah! This is my favourite Fall record. Is this the single version or the one from *Grotesque*?

This is from the album.

I don't know what to say about Mark E Smith. I think he's amazing. Every time I listen to his lyrics, you get all these images and ideas. I learn something new, although they're kind of hard to understand, rather like Captain Beefheart.

Did they influence you when you were younger?

I always had this thing that when you listen to the music of a band you can tell if they've listened to The Fall or not. They are so many bands I've heard when I thought, 'Right, they either don't like The Fall or haven't heard The Fall.' If you've heard The Fall and let it get into you, it does something to your music, which is a bit hard to explain in words. It's a bit like urban folk music of the 20th century. I think they could do terrible, terrible gigs but when they are on and he is in good shape... I saw a great one in Edinburgh, The Fall and The Membranes. Both bands were incredible. I went with Colin from The Dog Faced Hermans and it had a big impact on how we made our own music. The Membranes were running around all over the place and The Fall had two drummers both playing exactly the same thing, and Mark Smith was so strong. I live in Holland and when I play The Fall I get totally homesick. It's really northern English music.

Cato Salsa Experience & The Thing with Joe McPhee
"Baby Talk"
From *Two Bands And A Legend* (Smalltown Superjazzz) 2007

Is that Terrie playing guitar?

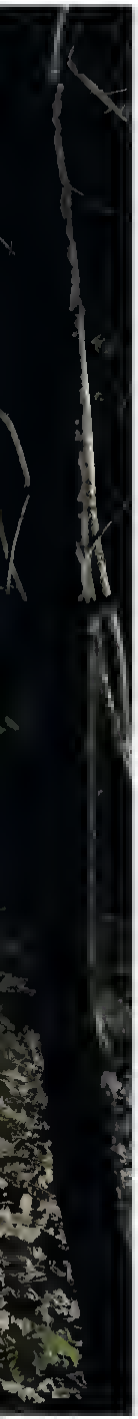
No, it's two Scandinavian groups.

Is that Mats Gustafsson? Paal Nilssen-Love?

Both, with Ingebrigt Håker Flaten on bass as The Thing, plus Joe McPhee on sax and The Cato Salsa Experience. The guitarist is Cato Thomassen.

That's a great scene, there are some great musicians from Norway and Sweden. They've got an amazing energy, really young, sort of improv, jazz, punky. Paal is an amazing drummer. Have you seen him live? It's shocking. I was mixing something of his and I was just listening to only the snare, and he can make the snare sound like a whole drum kit. It's very articulate. He tells a story when he plays – it's not just a rustling and a shuffling. Every beat he hits means something. When I've played with him, he's pushed me to play things that I probably would never have played. A musician can really push you into an unknown part of your own playing, and he has really done that. He's very different from Han, for example, a completely different style. It's phenomenal. □ *The Convoy Tour – 25 Years Of The Ex* DVD is out now on Ex Records. The Ex will be touring the UK in January–February 2010.

Jamaa Kirby aka The Caretaker in Katharinenhalz, near Potsdam, Germany, April 2009



James Kirby's move from the prankish plunderphonics of V/Vm to the haunted dancehall distortions of the **The Caretaker** and The Stranger is part of a longer game plan to map sonic disappearances, from lost popular musics to folk memories of the Miners' Strike. By Mark Fisher Photography by Jan Stradtmann

forgetting

"I have always been fascinated by memory and its recall, especially where sound is concerned," says James Kirby, aka The Caretaker, from his current base in Berlin. "Some things we remember easily and others we never seem to grasp. That idea was developed more on the box set I did [*Theoretically Pure Anterograde Amnesia*, 2006], which was based around a specific form of amnesia where sufferers can remember things from the past but are unable to remember new things. To recreate that in sound was a challenge that I relished, really. I realised the only way was to make a disorientating set with very few reference points. Fragments of melody breaking out of this monotonous tone and audio quagmire. Even if you listen over and over to all the songs, you still can't remember when these melodies will come in. You have no favourite tracks, it's like a dream you are trying to remember. Certain things are clear but the details are still buried and distant."

Kirby's description perfectly captures the unsettling experience of listening to *Theoretically Pure Anterograde Amnesia*. With the release of the six CD box set, his project The Caretaker crossed over from being an exercise in atmospheric nostalgia to being a harrowing investigation of memory disorder. The box set is more like a sonic installation than a record, a work whose conceptual and textural richness puts much sound art to shame. The first three Caretaker records – *Selected Memories From The Haunted Ballroom* (1999), *A Stairway To The Stars* (2001) and *We'll All Go Riding On A Rainbow* (2003) – swathed sampled British tearoom schmaltz in a gaslit halo of reverb and crackle. On *Theoretically Pure Anterograde Amnesia*, the effects and the surface noise take over, so that instead of a gently dub-dilapidated pop, there is an unnavigable murk, as abstract and minimal as a Beckett landscape. Echoes and reverberations float free of any originating sound source in a sea of hiss and static. If the earlier records suggested spaces that were mildewed but still magnificent – grand hotels gone to seed, long abandoned ballrooms – *Theoretically Pure Anterograde Amnesia* invokes sites that have deteriorated into total dereliction, where every unidentified noise is pregnant with menace. The 72 tracks – all of them numbered rather than named – simulate the amnesiac condition, and the few fragments of well known tunes that occasionally flare in the gloom are intermittent islands of familiarity in a world that has become hostile and unrecognisable.

"Maybe it's a dark humour, a kind of audio black comedy," Kirby says of The Caretaker, but the solemnity of the project belies his reputation as a prankster behind V/Vm, initially a duo with Andy McGregor. Launched in 1996 in Manchester, they notoriously released a version of Lieutenant Pigeon's "Mouldy Old Dough" just after appearing on the cover of *The Wire* 176 (October 1998) under the headline "Harder! Faster! Louder!". The 7" was one of a series of manglings of songs by the likes of Chris de Burgh, John Lennon and Elton John.

It is the focus on cultural memory that holds together all of Kirby's work, including the V/Vm mash-ups. If V/Vm's (sub)versions of pop come from the brash side of postmodern pastiche, then The Caretaker is about the dark side of culture: retrospection. *Theoretically Pure Anterograde Amnesia* was in many ways a diagnosis of a cultural pathology. It might seem strange to describe a culture that is so dominated by past forms as being amnesiac, but the kind of nostalgia that is now so pervasive may best be characterised not as a longing for the past so much as an inability to make new memories. Fredric Jameson described one of the impasses of postmodern culture as the inability "to focus our own present, as though we have become incapable of achieving aesthetic representations of our own current experience". The past keeps coming back because the present cannot be remembered. Memory disorders have recurred as themes in the popular cinema of the past decade or so: it's theoretically pure anterograde amnesia that afflicts Leonard, the lead character in Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000), while the massively successful *Bourne* films have been preoccupied with memory loss. It is not surprising that anxieties about memory should continually surface in late capitalism, where, as Jameson and others have argued, perpetual economic instability and the rapid turnover of ephemeral images lead to a breakdown in any coherent sense of temporality.

Kirby has approached the failure of the future from a different angle on another of his projects, 2006's *The Death Of Rave*. Here, rave is desubstantialised, stripped of all bass weight and drum propulsion, reduced to shimmer and haze. The tracks sound like they are being heard from outside a club – a horribly accurate sonic metaphor, perhaps, for our current state of exile from the future-shocking rate of innovation that dance music achieved in the 1980s and 90s. "That project really is in its infancy," Kirby says. "It came about as part of the V/Vm 365 project where the aim was to make one audio track a day. I used to go to raves when I was younger, went through that whole explosion in electronic music from 1987 to around 1992–93, when it seemed like there was a new genre every single week. It was an amazing time in music, to hear so many things happening and so many new possibilities opening up, and to see and feel the energy of new music exploding on dancefloors and in clubs. I think *The Death Of Rave* is about the loss of that spirit, and a total loss of energy in most electronic musics across the board.

"I feel sorry these days for people when I go to clubs, as that energy isn't there any more. I mean, we have some so-called very cool clubs in Berlin such as Watergate and Berghain, but you compare them to those back in the late 80s and early 90s in Manchester and it really is no comparison. Of course new things pop up, but the difference now really is that if something explodes, then before it can grow naturally, people have strangled it to death with parodies online, and often a scene or new style is dead before it even surfaces. House and Techno, for instance, took a long time to mature in Chicago and Detroit. Now there is no time, once an idea is out of the rabbit's hat, it's copied ad infinitum until the energy is gone.

"There
is
a
full
range
of
emotions
in
the
music,
from
loss
to
happiness,
dislocation,
regret,
longing.
Maybe
it's
the
source
music
which
inspires
this...
maybe
some
of
my
own
memories
are
intertwined
in
there"

"That is the key word – 'energy'," he continues "It's the one thing I have always been inspired by. For me, those *Death Of Rave* tracks are about stripping rave music from all its energy and spirit of fun – taking the audio from the rave to the grave, if you like." The tracks are like energy flashbacks, frail figments of rave reconstructed in a serotonin-depleted brain.

Kirby's other project, The Stranger, is organised around space rather than time. "The Stranger really is a darker version of The Caretaker and is its closest relative," he explains. "The Stranger is about creating a physical location in sound. The last album [*Bleaklow*, 2008], for example, was about the site of Bleaklow in the Peak District. It can be a grim place on dark grey days, but also beautiful on sunny days. Weirdly, I had a few people get in touch with me who walk up there and they told me I captured the atmosphere perfectly, and they used it as they were walking up there. I guess the odd glint of sunshine coming through that slate northern grey sky could be heard aurally."

Kirby now lives in Berlin. "I moved to Berlin as it has the atmosphere and opportunities of the big city, but also there's a lot of space to think more, and it's easy to hide away on the dark streets here. Also, it's not as brutal as Manchester, there is more of an openness, as people don't follow the media and news so much." Like The Stranger, though, The Caretaker remains a project rooted in Britishness – "It's often only British music which has been used as source material," he explains. A parellel for The Caretaker's excavation of pre-rock British pop is Dennis Potter's 1978 musical drama for television, *Pennies From Heaven*. "The use of audio in *Pennies From Heaven* is amazing," agrees Kirby, "along with its vibrancy and colour and, of course, the way Dennis Potter uses the sadness in the lyrics to keep telling the story is also special, as these songs really are stories in themselves. John Clifford and Herk Harvey's [1962 horror film] *Carnival Of Souls* was also a point of reference – the closing scenes in that film could even be audio from *A Stairway To The Stars*. I only saw that film after people had mentioned it to me. It works a lot that way: people will drew a line to something and I will then investigate that too."

But, of course, the initial impetus for The Caretaker was Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*. The name The Caretaker was taken from the role that Jack Torrence is condemned to play in the haunted Overlook Hotel ("You've always been the caretaker," Torrance is told in one of the film's most chilling moments). The concept was simple: inspired by "the haunting sequences which feature the ballroom music which is playing only in Jack's mind", Kirby thought, why not make a whole album of material that might also have played in the Overlook? The *Shining* soundtrack includes two tracks by Al Bowlly, the between-the-wars crooner whose songs feature in many of Potter's dramas, and Kirby sought out music in a similar vein. "I spent a lot of time searching out music from that era over a two or three year period," he says, "and started to play around with this source material. The interesting thing for me is the fact that most of that music is about ghosts and loss, as it was recorded between both the world wars. It's of a totally different era and had more or less been forgotten. Titles inspired new ideas, as did the audio itself. I was fortunate, as there was a great record shop near where I was in Stockport which was run by two old guys, and it specialised in 78s. I would take in audio and ask them what was similar, and they would scuttle off into the back of the shop and dig out some old catalogue from the 1930s and then pull out vinyls for me. It was an amazing resource which sadly is no longer there, as one of the guys passed away and the other decided to close the shop. It was like a timewarp in there, like going back 30 or 40 years. They would hand-write receipts, and half of their stock was in this backroom you were denied access to. They had no idea what I was doing in there buying these records, though one of them told me one time, 'You were born in the wrong era, as nobody is interested in this music who is your age'."

Kirby has turned to more recent history for an upcoming audio-visual project. "It has been in my mind for a while to work on a Scargill/Thatcher project," he explains, "and this is the perfect time now, as we approach the 25th anniversary of the Miners' Strike. A lot has been written elsewhere about this conflict and its outcome and legacy – I have been scouring online, and also have picked up some amazing footage to reprocess. It will link closely to The Caretaker in terms of its style, as it will be like watching a half-remembered version due to the processing. Some of the footage is totally ghostlike, as it was recorded on VHS tapes from miners back in 1984, so there is a real loss in quality and the sound fails to match the visuals. It's looking like a dream version, maybe. This will be mainly video work, with an incredibly limited vinyl release featuring audio from these videos and some exclusive audio work." This will fit into a series of artistic restagings of the Miners' Strike in recent years, including Jeremy Deller's *The Battle Of Orgreave* reenactment and David Peace's novel, *GB84*.

Kirby decided to close V/Vm down last year. "V/Vm was a vehicle for a lot of the work I have done, but I think now as music consumers we have reached a point where labels are not so important, what is more important is delivery and availability of work." It is partly the possibilities for the online distribution of music, which Kirby has always been enthusiastic about, that led him to end V/Vm, but he "also found I was using the name V/Vm less and less when it comes to new works. I've been working on a very personal album in terms of moods I want to convey, and I guess I may use my own name for that."

In fact, the album, entitled *History Always Favours The Winners*, will come out under the name Leyland Kirby. "Leyland is my grandather's and my middle name," he explains. "There are already too many James Kirbys making music out there, if I believe Google. Now I'm only competing with a glamour model from Sheffield in the Google search." The Leyland Kirby music might have been made without the use of samples, but it has clearly been informed by his time in the vaults. The tracks have an eerily untimely quality, a stately grace, a filmic scope. On "When Old Our Dreams And Futures Drift So Far Apart", a doleful, echo-refracted piano desolately tracks through subdued electronic textures. "The Sound Of Our Music Vanishing" is a more violent exercise in thwarted recall – here it's as if the memories are rushing in and being obliterated at the same time, as if tapes were being violently shredded instead of being left to gently disintegrate like William Basinski's The epic "When We Parted My Heart Wanted To Die", meanwhile, has a swelling, magisterial melancholy that recalls Angelo Badalamenti.

The Caretaker project continues, however. "I have started to play shows finally as The Caretaker," he confirms. "Usually I just like to let the music creep out of the speakers as if it's actually the venue playing the audio, or that the sounds are in your own mind. I played in Athens last week in a pitch black room, which worked well. Maybe I can work some visuals into the live process, but they would have to add to the audio and not distract the listening process. I am always, of course, interested in playing more relevant locations so for instance Blackpool Tower would be amazing, as the ballroom there is a great Victorian example and perfect for this particular audio recall."

"More than anything it's all about research and mood when making the albums," Kirby replies, when I ask him how he makes the Caretaker records. "Knowing the source material, maybe hearing a lyrical phrase which opens up an idea in my mind, or indeed just reading something, such as with the *Anterograde* box set, which sparked off another idea and offered a different tangent and possibility. Without going into the specifics, things are reworked totally in a digital realm until the right mood surfaces. It's very important, too, that I am in the right mood mentally to make that music, which I think comes across certainly in the later albums, as opposed maybe to the first album. I am getting better now at realising what days I get the best results when working on a specific project. It's strange, really, because there is a full range of emotions in the music when I listen back, from loss to happiness, dislocation, regret, longing. Maybe it's the source music itself which inspires this, but there are still, for me, a lot of personal moments in among those albums. Maybe even some of my own memories are intertwined in there."

The word 'research' keeps coming up in Kirby's discussion of The Caretaker. "I have been doing a lot of online research in the last couple of years and also have been watching a lot of documentaries about people who suffer from brain disorders and memory problems," he says. "The last release [2008's *Persistent Repetition Of Phrases*] was based around a lot of conditions where the sufferers just repeat themselves, so the audio featured a lot of loops and microloops. It was a lot warmer and more gentle than the box set release. Not all memories are necessarily bad or disturbing memories." On *Persistent Repetition Of Phrases*, one of *The Wire*'s top ten records of last year, there was accordingly a return of some of the prettiness that was absent from *Theoretically Pure Anterograde Amnesia*, but there was also an icy lucidity, an exquisite poise, about the record. It felt like a distillation and a consolidation. "The challenge now," he concludes, "is to move the sound somewhere else brain-wise and memory-wise. That will take time, to find the new direction. More research will have to be done before I find the best pathway for future exploration. I would also love to use this music on film, as it would be perfect for this, so maybe a door will open somewhere." ☐ Leyland Kirby's *Sadly, the Future Is No Longer What It Was* The Caretaker's *Theoretically Pure Anterograde Amnesia* and the entire V/Vm back catalogue are available from History Always Favours The Winners haftw.wordpress.com

All shook up

Dan Graham is the artist best known for his self-reflective installations of glass and mirrors. But he played a catalytic role in New York City's No Wave underground, and his documentary, *Rock My Religion*, traces the mythology of rock 'n' roll – including Jerry Lee Lewis, Patti Smith and Sonic Youth – back to America's Shaker movement. By **Anne Hilde Neset**. Photography by **Leon Chew**

"I like the fact that art can be simple cliches that are disposable," says Dan Graham, reclining in a minimalist leather chair in a glass chamber within London's Lisson Gallery, where a selection of models and drawings of his latest architectural work are in the process of being installed. 'Simple cliches' are about the last thing you would expect to be floating around Graham's head. In addition to his status as a pioneer of sculptural installation, conceptual, performance and video art, he is also a noted theorist and critic. It's often forgotten that his work enjoys a longstanding and symbiotic relationship with rock music, an interest that fed off and in turn reanimated the New York City downtown scene of the late 1970s and early 80s, when he became involved with Glenn Branca, Steve Reich and Sonic Youth. In particular, Graham is deeply inspired by rock writing, maintaining that as a critical apparatus it is as valid and deserving of respect as that of literature, fine art or architecture. In his 45 years of practice, he has inspired a vast amount of secondary literature and several retrospectives worldwide.

Graham bypassed art college, instead starting the John Daniels Gallery in New York in 1964, where he worked with minimalist artists such as Sol Lewitt and Dan Flavin. "We sold nothing," he remembers ruefully. "I didn't know anything about art, many of the artists there wanted to be writers. Certainly [Dan] Flavin wanted to be like James Joyce. [Robert] Smithson wanted to be like Borges and I was very interested in an American critic, Leslie Fiedler. I thought the best literary criticism was on rock 'n' roll records. And of course Paul Williams began [music magazine] *Crawdaddy* [in 1966]. He also did the archives of Philip K Dick. [Ten years later] Jon Savage was starting to publish. I thought the best critical writing around literature was done in rock 'n' roll," he asserts. "Of course, early Greil Marcus was very important, although his later work is a little bit soft. He keeps repeating himself. But that kind of writing inspired me."

In the art world, Graham is probably best known for his sculptural pavilions and architectural structures, often involving mirrors and reflective glass, but he has also written a good deal of music criticism in the past, his first pieces published in conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth's student paper, *Straight*. "I wrote an article on a concert I saw of The Byrds, The Seeds and Vanilla Fudge. And, as you probably know, The Seeds, along with Love, were the greatest group in America for many years," Graham asserts, without blinking. "There were two articles I did about The Kinks. One was for a rock magazine called *Future* when they were touring in America, and another was for a poetry magazine." Many of his texts on music – including the influential 1980 essay "New Wave And The Feminine", in which he discusses gender and sexual politics in Teenage Jesus And The Jerks, Ut, Siouxsie And The Banshees, X-Ray Spex and other groups – are collected in the much coveted but regrettably out of print title *Rock My Religion* (MIT 1993). "*Screen* magazine commissioned ["New Wave And The Feminine"]. But then they turned it down because they were embarrassed that I was making connections between Julia Kristeva and The Slits. Because they put French feminist theory on a high level and they didn't like the idea of these popular groups." He was close friends with Glenn Branca, and it was around the time of the article that Graham, along with his friend, the artist Jeff Wall, suggested to Branca that he should name his group Theoretical Girls, linking his ideas around female intellectualism directly with a practising (male) group.

"My first feminist piece was *Two Consciousness Projections* [1976], which was a piece I did at Nova Scotia College of Art," Graham explains. "There was a video monitor, and on top of it there was a camera aimed at a woman sitting down looking at the monitor, and the man was behind the monitor looking through the camera with a very intimate audience. The man was told to describe the woman who he saw through the camera, and the woman at the same time was describing herself. So it seemed like he was defining her, which was the old idea of Freudian analysis, but in fact the two overlap, so it also has to do with the Freudian cliche that we're always projecting onto each other. And the audience can see this. The audience tended to identify more with the women than the man, because she was more accurate than he was. He was trying to be objective, but of course there's no such thing as objectivity. Then I had people from the audience change places. So the man was in place of the woman, and vice versa. That was my first more or less feminist project."

Mirrors and perception recur throughout Graham's work, both in his sculptural installations and his performances. He performed *Performer/Audience/Mirror* (1977) at London's Riverside Studios in 1979, with Branca's group The Static. In the piece he faces the mirror and describes himself, while the audience is simultaneously confronted with its own reflection. The piece attempts to combine "behaviourism and phenomenology", as he later put it: the audience watch themselves watching the artist, who is looking at himself. A social experiment where gazes ricochet around the room, bouncing off one another.

The relationship between performer and audience has always been a central theme in Graham's work. In 1980, when artist and musician Christian Marclay, then a student at Massachusetts College of Art, invited him to talk about his art at the Eventworks festival in Boston in 1980, Graham sent three female friends in his place to participate in *All-Girl Band Identification Projection*, a performance intended to confuse and subvert the identities audience members subconsciously project on a performer. One of them was Kim Gordon, soon to become a founding member of Sonic Youth, who back then was mainly involved in visual art and had befriended Graham through art circles. According to all accounts, the performance was largely unsuccessful. "With the all-girl group, each one of us was supposed to stop at some point and interact with the audience and then go on

"I always thought – particularly because I was listening to hardcore – that rock 'n' roll comes out of using noise and the destructiveness of noise and sound, making it into something ecstatic. Where you can get in touch with God"

Shake baby shake: stills from Dan Graham's *Rock My Religion* (1982–84)

playing," Gordon explained in a British newspaper interview in 2003. "So I formed this group called CKM with Miranda Stanton and Christine Hahn, who went on to play with Malaria!, and we got together and wrote songs. I played guitar but I hadn't had any lessons, I just taught myself. And the lyrics were mostly taken from ad copy from magazines about seperates and lipstick and *Cosmopolitan* girl... I don't think we successfully did what Dan wanted us to do, though, because we were so preoccupied with the playing. I was hooked on the experience."

Gordon and Graham became close friends. And when Graham decided to do a rock documentary, he needed a rock heroine. "I got Kim Gordon her apartment, below my apartment. And then Thurston [Moore] moved in. I had keys to his place and he had keys to my place, and we would borrow records from each other," Graham divulges. "Thurston was a member of the Patti Smith fan club, so I went through his files and found all the information on Patti Smith that she'd put in her fan club newsletters." Drawing on Moore's "musical connoisseurship", as Graham puts it, he put together the hour-long video documentary *Rock My Religion* (1982–84), featuring Patti Smith in a central role. The film starts with a thrilling and provocative montage of images of stark factories, slow motion footage of Black Flag's Henry Rollins writhing in front of an audience, and images of a 19th century religious utopian sect, all soundtracked by Sonic Youth and Patti Smith.

A voiceover tells the story of Ann Lee, the 18th century blacksmith's daughter who fled to America from the religious persecution of industrial England, and founded the Shakers, a puritanical strand of Protestantism. The narration is intercut with concert footage of Smith singing "Piss Factory" and, on a certain level, evoking her own sense of sexual and class oppression in a post-industrial America from the stage. The film is a complex meditation on spectacle, the role of the messianic rock star, sexuality, mass consumption, work, and the emergence of rock music with Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis and The Doors. The Shakers believed man to be mired in sin and redeemed only through hard work, celibacy and bodily communion, their rituals of shaking and trembling were thought to be caused by sin being purged from the body by the purifying Holy Spirit. The followers of Mother Ann came to believe that she embodied all the perfections of God in female form.

"There's a book that Dolores Hayden did called *Seven American Utopias* [1979], and all the utopian communes in America after the industrial revolution had to do with redefining sexual relations, and also contesting the patriarchy. And of course Ann Lee... thought that sexual reproduction destroyed the possibilities for women. Ann Lee was revolting against the end of the peasant work ethic where everyone worked together on farms. Because when the industrial revolution began, people were enslaved by machines. I always thought – particularly because

Courtesy Lisson Gallery (*Rock My Religion*). Courtesy Walker Art Center (*Don't Trust Anyone Over Thirty*)

I was listening to Hardcore – that rock 'n' roll comes very much out of using noise and the destructiveness of noise and sound, making it into something ecstatic, where you can get in touch with God."

The ecstatic properties of noise – its obliteration of meaning and saturation of frequencies invoking comparison with religious rapture – constitute only part of *Rock My Religion*'s story. The documentary also points to a deeper historical undercurrent, pointing to a new teenage population, starting in the 1950s, who sought freedom and relief through mass consumption, and whose sexuality could be channelled through rock 'n' roll stars instead of sublimated by the church's forbidding preachers.

"I made the connection to the industrial revolution because I think rock 'n' roll in America *began* with the industrial revolution," Graham elucidates. "Also, in the area of art in the American scene, everyone was in love with neo-expressionism, especially [German painter and sculptor] Anselm Kiefer. And of course, that's all [about] the mythology of Germany. So I thought, 'Why can't we do a mythology of America going back to the British influences, through rock 'n' roll?' So it was my American strategy as opposed to his deep mythology of Germany."

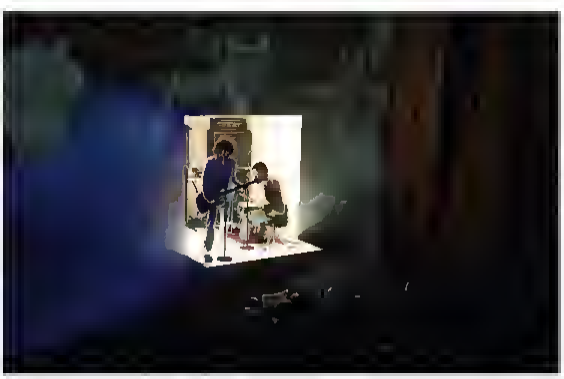
Among the rough collage of images adorning the cover of Sonic Youth's *Sister* album (1987), there is a picture of boxy suburban housing. It is part of a photographic series – or rather a piece of conceptual 'magazine art' – published in *Arts Magazine* by Graham in 1966. '*Homes For America* had a lot to do with "Mr Pleasant" by The Kinks and "Nowhere Man" by The Beatles," he comments. The piece documented developments of standardised houses that could be ordered from a catalogue and quickly erected in multiple units. The piece, written as a journalistic parody, neutrally analyses the various models, colours and features offered to prospective buyers, giving them the illusion of choice. The repetitive architecture and monotonous structures reflect Graham's interest in minimalism, and points towards his friendship with Steve Reich and, later, Glenn Branca. When asked to curate and contribute to an issue of *Aspen*, the influential 'three dimensional magazine' published in a box, containing articles, records and printed scores, Graham included a La Monte Young flexidisc and scores by Reich and Philip Glass. "What I liked about La Monte Young is that, when you see La Monte Young perform you have a feeling that the music or sounds are emanating from the architecture. Actually, when you hear The Feelies live you have the same feeling. It was from inside your brain and inside the architecture at the same time, so it was physiological. And my interest there was the idea of the spectator as being more important than the art object. I think it was the spectator's own physiological processes that interested me."

Another song that inspired one of Graham's magazine interventions was The Rolling Stones' "Mother's Little Helper". *Side Effects/Common Drug* (1966) is a chart intended for publication in a women's magazine. "I wanted to do something that would actually be posted in a magazine, then disposed of after the issue," Graham clarifies. "The Rolling Stones were accused of taking drugs and said, 'Well, look at housewives: they take drugs.'" The chart lists prescription drugs on one side and side effects on the other and indicates what impact each of the drugs might have. "So you take one drug, a tranquiliser, and then you have a side effect, depression, so you have to take another, an anti-depressant, and so forth." Although no women's magazine saw fit to publish *Side Effects/Common Drug*, Graham's idea nevertheless seeded the idea of treating a magazine as a kind of civic square, as an effective means of reaching the public.

In more recent years, Graham's work has focused mainly on architecture and sculpture. The puppet rock opera *Don't Trust Anyone Over Thirty* (2004) is an exception. Made in collaboration with visual artists Rodney Graham, Tony Oursler and puppeteer Laurent Berger, and featuring neo-punk group Japanther, the opera takes its cues from the 1968 film *Wild in The Streets*. "My adaptation placed the period as the end of the hippy period when the hippies were moving to the country, and I costumed the puppets. The lead singer and head of the rock group was called Neil Sky – a combination of Sky Saxon and Neil Young – and his girlfriend was based on the persona of Linda Johnson. She's a Mexican American who was Miss Arizona, and became a very big singer." Neil Sky is a 24 year old who, by his energetic, riotous demeanour, charms the nation and becomes the elected president of the United States after doping Senate members with LSD and managing to convince them to lower the voting age to 14. He moves the White House to Camp David – a White House in the country – and relocates everyone over 30 to 're-education camps'. "Sky adopts a small son because he thinks only children have the answer to everything," adds Graham, "and when he goes on tour and doesn't take his son with him, the son revolts against him and says he wants to put everybody over ten out of business." It's an absurd and hilarious reading of late 60s hippy counterculture, as well as a comment on society's obsession with youth, and by casting the opera as a puppet show, the adult audience are treated as children.

Graham is a big Billy Wilder fan and an outspoken cheerleader for stand-up comedians, especially Jewish ones. His playfulness with audiences, formats and venues bears witness to a deep held interest in popular culture, while his mercurial flight between different artforms continues to confuse art historians and collectors. In conversation he exists in a continuous fast forward mode, maintaining an extraordinarily high idea-per-second ratio. By keeping his ideas compact, he slips them more easily into popular culture. "[I like] short forms, not long forms," he concludes. "The short form in rock music interests me a lot, and the same thing in art. I like something that's short." □ Dan Graham: Beyond Retrospective is at New York Whitney Museum 25 June–October 2009, and Minneapolis Walker Art Centre November 2009–February 2010.

Puppetry rock opera *Don't Trust Anyone Over Thirty* (2004)



Hopeful

Freaks of nature born before their time, progressive folk legends **Comus** came up through David Bowie's South London Arts Lab, only to find their malevolent murder ballads went completely against the prevailing hippy 'peace and love' vibe. Splitting up shortly after their debut album, Comus have lain dormant since – until their recent reawakening, encouraged by fans like Current 93 and Swedish Death Metallers Dpeth. By **Rob Young**. Photography by **Tara Darby**

monsters

Paradise returned. Comus today.
Left to right: Jon Seagroatt, Roger Wootton (in tree), Andy Helmby, Bobbie Watson and Glenn Gering, Hampstead Heath, London, April 2009. (Absent: Colin Pearson).

Skin cherred to a leathery black and gagging on its own bile, the emaciated homunculus hauls itself by its elbows across a white backdrop. Ripped from the sketchbook of a demented artist, this twisted image is plastered across the gatefold sleeve of one of the great lost albums of the early 1970s British underground – Comus's *First Utterance*. It's a record that periodically hoves into view, cited in *The Wire*'s 100 Records That Set The World On Fire (issue 175), wistfully namechecked in lists of 'acid folk' albums... but somehow, the measure of this forbidding, unplaceable, often savage music has never been wholly taken. It deploys its mainly acoustic elements – guitars, violin, flute and oboe, bongos and percussion, plus electric bass – over seven tracks, with a viciousness seldom heard in the more pastorally inclined folk rock of the time. And then there are the vocals – a male lead who swoops from a saturnine soprano to gutteral lecherous goading, and a high female shadow, harmonising then shriekingly locking into disharmonies acrid enough to sour milk.

The self-loathing mannekin of *First Utterance* is the napalmed orphan of Woodstock and Glastonbury's love children. The group formed around 1968, its original line-up fell apart in 1972, and apart from a brief studio-only reunion to record a second, very different and less successful LP for Virgin in 1974, it has lain extinct ever since. Historically, Comus squats on the threshold of two eras: between the hippy Arcadia and the birth of something harder-tipped and more self-regarding. It's what evolutionists call a 'hopeful monster': a freak which nature selected on a whim, only to die off before its innate characteristics can be transmitted to future generations.

At least, that's how it appeared until recently. But against all odds, Comus are back from the dead. 35 years after the group fell silent, they were tracked down by Mikael Åkerfeldt of Opeth, a Grammy-winning Swedish 'Progressive Death Metal' group who are obsessed with Comus, down to titling albums and songs after phrases found in lyrics from *First Utterance*. Åkerfeldt invited Comus to perform at the Mellotronen Festival, a heavy rock beano held aboard a floating ship off the Swedish coast, in early 2008. Surprised and flattered by the contact, Comus's female vocalist Bobbie Watson decided that if they were to make the effort, it should be more than just a brief, self-congratulatory run through of a couple of numbers for old time's sake. She rounded up as many former members as were willing to take part, working especially hard on the lead singer and prime mover, Roger Wootton, breaking down his initial reluctance.

They enjoyed the reunion so much, they're now appearing at this month's Equinox Festival in London (playing *First Utterance* in its entirety), and have a handful of live appearances lined up over the rest of the summer. In addition, they will be unveiling new material that, they claim, picks up directly where *First Utterance* left off.

The silver-haired gentleman who greets me from a leather armchair at the Atlantis Bookshop in Central London is polite and enthusiastic: the notorious demons held in check. This is Roger Wootton, owner of the infernal larynx that makes Comus so distinctive, and we are soon joined by his vocal complement, Bobbie Watson. Today, most of the Comus members are scattered around southern England (apart from violinist Colin Pearson, who lives in Germany). Wootton has travelled up from the Bromley suburb where he currently resides, and Watson has driven in from Oxfordshire. Bassist Andy Hellaby lives in London, while guitarist Glenn Goring inhabits the tranquil Suffolk village of Beccles. Missing from the *First Utterance* personnel is the percussionist, flautist and oboe player, whose name coincidentally is Rob Young. He has made a successful career in America as a designer of flight simulation programs, and his part is taken in the new Comus by Watson's husband Jonathan Seegroatt, who has played over the years in a number of avant garde improvising outfits including the free Noise trio Red Square (see Soundcheck, *The Wire* 300).

The memories soon start to flow, of their teenaged lives four decades earlier, when they met at a shared house in Perth Road in Beckenham, a suburb of London so far south east, it's in the county of Kent. Wootton met Glenn Goring, a fellow student at Ravensbourne Art College in nearby Bromley, around 1968. "We gradually started playing in our spare time and one thing led to another," says Wootton, of his and Goring's duo acoustic guitar jams, which soon led to a smattering of appearances at local folk clubs playing "Velvet Underground covers and our own tentative compositions". Soon after, they recruited Ravensbourne student Colin Pearson, a classically trained violinist, Andy Hellaby on bass, and multi-instrumentalist Young, who added flute, oboe and bongos to the mix. Wootton's appetite for music was already voracious, and he proselytised his eclectic tastes with missionary zeal. Goring remembers being introduced to Charles Mingus, John Coltrane, Archie Shepp and Ornette Coleman, while Young describes intense listening sessions that included King Crimson, Pink Floyd and contemporary composers such as Takemitsu, Messiaen, Stravinsky and Bartok. Both Wootton and Goring were huge fans of the jazz- and medievalist folk flavours of Bert Jansch and John Renbourn, and The Incredible String Band's tanglewood of visionary poesy and spiritual exploration. "You fell in with a lot of different scenes then," says Wootton, and indeed those early months threw up intriguing possible futures that never quite emerged. Wootton, training as a graphic artist, drew the cover art for *Tone Float*, the debut album by pre-Kraftwerk duo The Organisation, jams at Perth Road were occasionally joined by Jamaican trombonist Rico Rodriguez and flautist Mike Rose, from nearby Brixton, while their first female vocalist was Wootton's girlfriend at the time, Nita Bowes, later Clarke, who went on to marry Stephen Benn, son of Labour politician Tony, becoming a prominent consultant to the Blair cabinet. But she was sacked once the group heard Bobbie Watson's impromptu harmonising. "I suppose I was entranced by the sound of the guitars, seeing Roger and Glenn together," muses Watson today.

Comus's formative period was spent in residence at Growth, the 'Arts Lab' run by David Bowie at a pub in Beckenham High Street. "Beckenham in many ways was a small community, and there were, apart from David Bowie, other quite well known musicians living within a stone's throw of each other," recalls Goring. "Names I can remember are Arthur Brown, Julie Driscoll, Keith Tippett and Jack Lancaster of Blodwyn Pig. The Arts Lab was based in quite a large room at the Three Tuns pub in Beckenham High Street. That's where we first saw Bowie perform "Space Oddity" with the Stylophone on his knees, sitting on a bar stool, and a four-track tape machine playing a backing track behind him. This was unusual at the time." Bowie, living nearby at his Haddon Hall commune with his wife Angie, with his hair still in the tumbling locks that appear on the *Space Oddity* and *Hunky Dory* albums, made his Arts Lab the focal point for the district's alternative artistic community. Comus took part in the Beckenham Free Festival of August 1969 – later commemorated in Bowie's anthemic "Memory Of A Free Festival" – alongside club regulars The Strawbs, Keith Christmas and Bridget St John. Within a couple of years, Bowie would chop his hair and, along with Marc Bolan, another club regular, leave psychedelic folk's perfumed garden far behind, striking out for glam rock's wilderness of mirrors. But at the time, Goring remembers, 'He used to sit cross-legged on the floor just a few feet away from us, rocking backwards and forwards. He had a huge grin on his face and really looked as if he was getting off on Comus's music. For lack of a better word, there was a real buzz generally in Beckenham itself, and the Arts Lab was a kind of hub, a centre from which that buzz was generated." Comus appeared as Bowie's support when he played a prominent showcase gig at the Purcell Room on London's Southbank, apparently enraging him by blowing his own act offstage.

For a while, says Goring, the group was known as Pavlov's Dogs, although Wootton claims they changed their name almost every week. But when Chris Youle, their manager, handed them a bookmarked copy of John Milton's poetry, their identity was determined

Gatefold sleeve of Comus's *First Utterance* (Dawn 1971)

'POP' FESTIVAL'S IN RECREATION GROUND

Encouraging start for the Arts Lab

ALTHOUGH **Beckenham Arts Lab (now called simply Growth) is still in its embryonic stage its summer festival, held at Croydon Road Recreation Ground last Saturday, obviously had not suffered from growing pains (writes David Baird).**

The festival was compered by the Beckenham composer David Bowie who introduced top name groups to an estimated 3 000 visitors.

Among the local groups performing on the band stand near Beckenham Hospital were Comus, who should go a long way with their distinctive sound produced by a Indian oil flute, violin and 12-string guitar.

Gun Hill lacked, perhaps the professional polish of Comus, but they obviously have a feeling for blues.

The Gas Worm entertained with song satirical songs but they also did an excellent blues "Standing Stuff" which featured harmonica, kettledrum, guitar and kazoo.

"The Strawbs" are becoming well known nationally and put over their own special brand of "protest" song forcefully.

FROM OVERSEAS

Keith Christmas who has built up a reputation in folk clubs performed some folk blues numbers with superb guitar accompaniment.

David Bowie himself put particular zest into his compositions, battling bravely against troublesome loud speakers, and a friend, Peter Hirton from Vienna played a classical piece for guitar. Mr Hirton, who represented Austria in the Eurovision song contest in 1967 sang in English his plaintive composition "The Little Bird."

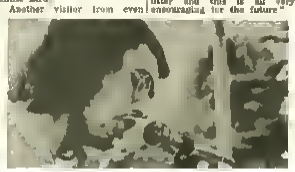
Another visitor from even further afield was an Indian gentleman with a sitar his appearance at the festival surprised the audience as much as the organisers.

PUPPET SHOW

A children's puppet show run by Barbara Cole and Brian Moore was adapted for older members of the audience to enjoy as well. The colourful puppets were also manipulated by Sasha Thomas, Dave Nalli, Clodwyn Hughes and Dave Eshington.

Growth recouped the money they had put into the festival from a barbecue, exotic tea sandy Rose and herb and penny stall. Some interestingly designed rings made from aluminium, were being sold by Dave Grosier and Pete Legon.

One of the organisers Mary Finnigan told me, "The festival was a great success. All the visitors were extremely well behaved and there were no incidents. Most youngsters were very co-operative in collecting litter and this is all very encouraging for the future."



Courtesy Bobbie Watson

"During the hippy period, it was all 'love and peace, man'. But what you actually had was a lot of people who didn't really fit in"

The poem properly entitled *A Maske Presented At Ludlow Castle, 1634: On Michaelmasse Night, etc*, but usually known as the more familiar *Comus*, deals, like Milton's most famous work *Paradise Lost*, with the destruction of innocence. Comus is a depraved wood-dwelling beast who preys on a lady, exhausted and abandoned in the forest by her brothers who have gone to seek help. Comus uses sweet, intoxicating music and "well-placed words of glozing courtesy" to charm and incapacitate his virginal victim. The "foul enchanter" hauls her off to his leafy lair, binds her to a "marble venomed seat" with "gums of glutinous heat", and – in what may be the first known literary account of date-rape – tries to force the damsel to take a slurp from his "liquorish baits". As in *Paradise Lost*, Milton's verse achieves its most feverish register when describing the evil one, while the virtuous mortals seem priggish and, well, square.

"Song To Comus", the centrepiece of *First Utterance*, and "Diana", the opener, both hum with the bestiality of Milton's *Comus*. But these weird, debauched defilements are not celebrations of misogyny, the destructive force is really aimed at a hippy populace that had drifted into inertia by the end of the 1960s and was badly in need of a wake-up call.

"I suppose it was a reaction to a lot of what was going on," admits Wootton, "and I found things to react to in the hippy movement that annoyed me. It was all too sweet and nice, and I found it very limp and weak. It's funny, during the hippy period, it was all 'love and peace, man', and everyone mixing in. But what you actually had was a lot of people who didn't really fit together."

Instead of browbeating with high volume, Comus songs insinuated themselves under the skin. In "Diana", Milton's beastly deceiver reappears (*"Lust he follows virtue close/Through the steaming woodlands"*). "The Herald" is a brief interlude of peace, a pastoral evocation of the dawn, featuring Andy Helleby's extended bass technique, using a metal guitar slide to generate an ethereal, eldritch whine. But with the sunrise comes the culling. The opening guitar chops of "Song To Comus" strut like the creature stealthily stalking his prey through the forest (*"Hymen hunter, hands of steel, crack you open and your red flesh peel"*). Wootton employs an odd technique of beating his lungs with his fist while singing to emit a breathless tremolo effect. In "Drip Drip", a murderer lustfully contemplates his bleeding victim's corpse as he buries it in a forest. "The Bite" mercilessly describes the lynching of a Christian.

"What is a Comus song?" Bobbie Watson is musing. "It's got to have the right subject matter, not necessarily blood and guts, but – if you think of a song like "The Herald" – spiritual and otherworldly. Or on the other hand it's got to have something really gutsy and a little bit nasty and slightly malevolent and threatening, and lots of fast-moving, unusual chords to fit the bill, and things that can bear some percussion and solos. One of Roger's talents is he has this idea of drama."

Goring backs this up. "Roger was a very angry geezer in those days, but he was also very proactive.

"Most of *First Utterance* was done during a power strike I remember sitting in the recording booth painting the inside of the gatefold sleeve between takes in candlelight"

Live at North East London Polytechnic 1971

Comus circa 1972. Back row: Roger Wootton, Andy Helleby, Colin Pearson. Front: Lindsay Cooper, Glenn Goring, Bobbie Watson

He didn't sit around dreaming. He often plays with tremendous force, using fingerpicks, and sometimes literally smashes his guitar like he's trying to milk every ounce of expression out of it. My playing could be described as perhaps more melancholic, intricate and reflective. The combination of our two styles and the sound we created inspired and excited us. I played 12-string and slide, and Roger played an acoustic steel string that was literally held together by sellotape.

"I see Roger as a musical thespian, like an opera singer who plays a role. The Comus character is one he plays extremely well. Only a nutter could possibly believe that Roger's lyrics are his or the band's manifesto."

Wootton himself testifies that "It's a character thing, because I can go there. The sort of manic, evil space that I can play around with, and you can get all this psychotic imagery. I came from a rural background in Kent, I had a very difficult upbringing with my parents – it put that anger and aggression into me. I hated my mother, so that was the anti-female things and the rape and murdering women – I don't want to psychoanalyse, but at the time it was much more instinctual than intellectually deliberate. I was on a roll with it. With a rural background, and being interested in folk – and hallucinogenic drugs was part of the chemistry – I just kind of found it, and found that archetype."

How did this misogynistic content affect Bobbie Watson? "I was 16 and hadn't had any influence on anything, but it was exciting and I wanted to be part of it if they were going to let me, so I wasn't going to be judgmental about the songs. Though it was really nasty, bloodthirsty stuff: the way it was written was really poetic. I wasn't disapproving... I used to love fairy stories, and I don't mean the pretty stuff. *The Snow Queen* and *The Red Shoes* – frightening but really good. That was the only way I could find into the Comus stuff."

The group feel, to this day, that *First Utterance* was a failure, poorly representing the full force of their live sound. "It sounds tinny and thin compared to how we really sounded," complains Watson. "Most of it was done during a power workers' strike," adds Goring, "so electrical blackouts were a common occurrence and dogged most of the proceedings. I remember sitting in one of the recording booths painting the inside of the gatefold sleeve between takes in candlelight." Produced quickly and cheaply in October 1970, at Pye Studios in Central London, and released on Dawn, the 'underground' subsidiary of Pye Records, the record nevertheless sounds like little else at the time. Producer Barry Murray was flummoxed initially by the lack of drum kit, as he was used to recording rhythm tracks first.

First Utterance had actually received an unlikely trial run beforehand, during the summer of 1970, when Comus were selected to contribute to the soundtrack to *Permissive*, a film by the Canadian director Lindsay Shonteff. Remembered, if at all, for fairly lame spoof James Bond thrillers and cheap horror flicks, Shonteff made a string of blue movies at the start of the 70s, including *Permissive*, a voyeuristic groupie picture. The film is set amid the London underground rock scene of the day and stray members of Comus – as well as Prog outsiders Titus Groan – can be glimpsed in a handful of after-gig party scenes. "Mungo Jerry failed the audition and we got it," remembers Wootton. "We did another three films with that director, including *Big Zapper* [1973]. *Permissive* is mostly *First Utterance*. We may have done something original for some sequence, but if you watch the film, most of it is snippets from the album, before we made it. I was going to be a star in it, you know – I was going to play the lead role, of the hippy. But I couldn't get off on it – it was not for me." *Permissive* had a very similar subtext to Comus's album. Maggie Stride plays Suzy, a young girl up from the country, who becomes involved in the London rock scene and is cruelly used by members of a real-life hard rock act called Forever More. She is 'saved' by a nomadic hippy called Pogo, a genial busker and free spirit with a disturbing habit of busting into churches and delivering conspiracist, anti-capitalist rants to all and sundry – a fanatical fly in the ointment of respectable society. *First Utterance*, like *Permissive*, is a warning against adopting innocence as a creed: it may seem virtuous, but it leaves you fatally exposed to corruption, being rapaciously used, or violent ends.

First Utterance's impact on the public was muted, thanks in no small measure to a postal strike which held up its appearance in shops. But in any case, 1971 was a reckoning year for British folk rock, the underground could not sustain itself economically and many short-lived outfits were scythed away in the harvest. Although the group were on a small wage from Dawn, they were living practically at subsistence level. By the time a fire destroyed their shared house at Perth Road, Wootton and Watson were already living at their respective parents' homes to save on rent.

"Glam rock eclipsed us," concedes Wootton. "The irony is that David Bowie, who actually helped us off the ground, became our nemesis. Glam rock suddenly came in and suddenly the audience figures dropped right off, we got fewer and fewer gigs, and no one was interested. We couldn't get any work." It was a time of structural adjustment in the economy of rock. There was a choice to be made: reinvent or die. Bowie, Marc Bolan, Pink Floyd – former champions of the London underground – made that choice and went stellar. Comus were among the many that withered on the vine. Manager Chris Youle was offered a lucrative job at Polydor Records. "We split up because we had to – there wasn't a choice. Rob left, for example, because of the poverty, and the hand to mouth existence – he couldn't take it any more. Fortunately, there was never any bad blood among the band, it was just bad what we went through. And that was why we didn't want to reform [for a long time], because it brought back all those bad memories. But why it can work now, is that there was never any conflict among members of the band."

Though the group officially disbanded in mid-1972, a second incarnation was briefly convened for a second album, *To Keep From Crying*, in 1974, commissioned by Virgin Records. Featuring bassoonist Lindsay Cooper of Henry Cow, and Didier Malherbe of Gong, it's an uncomfortable mix of experimental techniques and attempts at commercial songwriting, and while a very different proposition from *First Utterance*, parts of it haven't aged too badly. Nevertheless, it too failed to make any headway, and Comus slunk once more to the netherworld.

Misunderstood and reviled at the time, Comus are finding new allegiances in a 21st century that appears more sympathetic to the darker, weirder aspects of 'folk'. They're a big influence on aspects of Current 93, who covered the Comus song "Diana" on 1990's *Horse*, and whose *Earth Covers Earth* (1988) was reportedly intended as a 'Second Utterance'. In addition, Comus's Gothic atavism has found a sympathetic resonance with the progressive end of Black and Death Metal, and their recent reunion was entirely due to the motivations of Swedish group Opeth, who practically demanded they reform in early 2008.

"Mikael of Opeth was an enormous Comus fan," says Wootton. "Opeth were asked to play the Melloboat, and he said, 'On one condition: if you can get Comus to reform'," Watson adds. "I thought if we're going to do it, we've got to do it properly. The guy's paying our air fares, we can't perform two songs, it didn't seem right."

At first, admits Wootton, "it felt so strange, like a tribute band learning somebody else's stuff. After 35 years, every cell in your body has changed..." It was very different from their earlier Comus gigs. Back in 1971, for instance, Watson was never faced with a queue of 18 year old American youths who had crossed the Atlantic especially to see her group, and were now standing in line to meet their idol. But discovering so much support for the group made them seriously consider properly reviving the project. This month, they intend to perform *First Utterance* in its entirety at the Equinox Festival in London, plus a new song Wootton has written in the same vein – the first of a planned album's worth of fresh material. "The point I'm trying to get back to," he says, "is post-*First Utterance*, but before anything else. Mid-71, and what we're working on is the album that would have been *Second Utterance*."

"I took a long time to be persuaded to do it," continues Wootton. "Now I'm doing it, it's made me committed. One thing you have to realise: it's very intense music, it's very difficult to perform. You have to really concentrate and give everything. I didn't realise at the time how much concentration and physical strength it needs. It requires me to be as fit as I can possibly be. When we first started rehearsing I felt physically exhausted. Once you start doing that, and start writing new material that does that to you, you have to commit or jack it in – there is no halfway house." □ *First Utterance* and *To Keep From Crying* are available with extra material on *Songs To Comus The Complete Collection* (Sanctuary). Comus appear at the Equinox Festival this month (see Out There), and at Moseley Folk Festival in September. comusmusic.co.uk

Tony Kite (Comus 1972)

Ornette Coleman at home in New York City, April 2009

Faith

healer

Half a century after he boldly predicted the shape of jazz to come, and now in his 80th year, master musician Ornette Coleman is once more entering a phase of high activity, as curator of London's Meltdown Festival and running his current group with son Denardo. Here he dispenses his egalitarian philosophy of universal language and sound grammar, the logic behind his stop-start work rate, and his belief that music is a healing force. By Phil Freeman. Photography by Mark Mahaney

By the time I arrive at Ornette Coleman's midtown Manhattan apartment on a sunny Monday afternoon in April, we've been trying to make an interview happen for more than a week. I've been exchanging phone calls and emails with his son and drummer Denardo, receiving status updates as the 79 year old saxophonist recuperates from an illness that has left him bedridden for several days. As I exit the lift that opens directly into Ornette's loft-like living space, though, the room is filled with company and boisterous conversation. Two women friends from the neighbourhood are eating and talking with him at a small kitchenette/bar in the centre of the large main room. Denardo and I sit on a couch by a window overlooking the street and chat, eating chocolate cake until Ornette is ready.

The apartment is filled with light. Paintings and large Pop Art pieces adorn the walls, including two silk-screened portraits of Geronimo, and African statues stand in corners. The only area separated from the rest is the music room, which is behind a glass door. Inside that room are a keyboard and a small drum kit, and two of the walls are taken up with shelves full of books, CDs, albums and videocassettes. An original vinyl copy of guitarist James 'Blood' Ulmer's *Tales Of Captain Black* lies out, as though someone has recently revisited this 1978 record on which Ornette plays saxophone and Denardo plays drums and which the saxophonist released on his own short-lived Artists House label. The third wall is covered by another gigantic piece of Pop Art, this one incorporating the infamous Eddie Adams photo of a street execution in Vietnam. Medals Ornette has received – one from his home state of Texas and a Grammy honour accompanied by a framed letter from New York mayor Michael Bloomberg – are also on display, but my eye's drawn to the floor. Leaning against the wall, beneath the Pop Art mural, is the mask from the cover of *Dancing In Your Head*, the album that introduced Ornette's electric group Prime Time to the world.

When he finally sits down, some 30 minutes after I arrive, he's all smiles. At 79, he's physically somewhat frail, but his mind is as agile as his leaping, twirling saxophone melodies. Over the course of nearly 90 minutes, he circles around several core themes – the nature of music, the meaning of existence, and even mortality. "I'm in my seventies, I was born in 1930," he says. "And I don't think about getting old, though I know I'm gonna die. What I think about is, how can I exist as a human being that knows how human languages are expressed, how everything is put together, but what I don't know is why does something have to kill you that has nothing to do with if it needs to kill you? The things that kill you don't need to kill you, but [they do]."

He's a whole lot less interested in talking names, dates and places, making questions about the London Meltdown Festival he's curating this month a dicey proposition. He'd rather talk about the animating philosophy behind it than who's performing. "The first thing I would think about is the ideas," he says. "I would think about who would be more or less creating the quality of information that [people] would enjoy – for instance, a bass player as opposed to a piano player, a guitar player as opposed to a flute, they're two different subjects. I mean, music encompasses it all, but [the word] music doesn't tell you how certain things are going to sound. Most people think of music as just the quality of someone expressing the words. The words are the changes or the melody. The best thing that I enjoy about being a musician is that every person feels different about how it affects them."

Ornette speaks in aphorism and metaphor, waxing philosophical in ways that seem totally unrelated to the question asked. "Look at the human race," he begins, when asked about the tradeoffs between acoustic and electric instruments. "You and I are two different races, but we're still human. Well, that's true about the whole world, isn't it? Now, that is amazing to realise that, I don't know how many different species make up the world, but they all end up having a brain, eyes, nose, mouth and hands. How else could we represent human if it wasn't for humans being in the form they're in?" Eventually, he gets to the subject nominally under discussion, but only when I get home and transcribe the interview do his insights unfold like a flower. One can only imagine what it must be like to be in a group with the man, receiving instructions in this oblique way and being expected to respond to them in real time: it's no wonder Ornette is fascinated by language, a subject to which he returns to over and over during our conversation. "I don't know how many languages make up the human race, but every language has the sensitivity of its own emotion," he says. "It's kind of strange to read the same thing over and you still don't know it because it's in a different language or something. [But no matter] what the language is, the human is still made the same way. We're all made the same way."

It's 50 years since Ornette Coleman and his group – trumpeter Don Cherry, bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Billy Higgins – emerged into public consciousness with *The Shape Of Jazz To Come*. As its title indicated with utterly justified hubris, the album, actually his third, was a manifesto. Over the course of six tracks, the saxophonist and his partners exploded jazz, picked up the shards, and rearranged them into patterns every bit as beautiful as what had come before, just with the edges showing. Ornette's melodies ran long, as discursive as his sentences. His tone, produced by a white plastic alto saxophone, was sharp yet utterly controlled; every note, no matter how seemingly jarring in the moment, was intentional and part of a larger concept. In three years, Ornette and his group – with Ed Blackwell succeeding Higgins, and Scott LaFaro and Jimmy Garrison sometimes subbing for Haden – recorded six albums and a few more discs' worth of outtakes, including the landmark double quartet session *Free Jazz*, which pioneered the sort of collective fireworks that would become commonplace in the 1960s avant garde (or repurposed the wild, frenetic collective improvisation of early 20th century New Orleans groups, depending on how you look at it).

After this burst of activity, however, he took several years off in response to what he regarded as the paltry fees and degraded working conditions that were being offered to him by promoters and record labels. He re-emerged in 1965, and as the decade progressed, he changed personnel seemingly every year, performing live with bassist Oevid Izenzon and drummer Charles Moffett, heading into the studio with Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones, and recording two albums – 1966's *The Empty Foxhole* and 1969's *Ornette At 12* – with his then pre-teen son, Oenardo, on drums. The latter decision was about more than just convenience; in 2007, Ornette told *The Guardian*'s Andrew Purcell, "From the start, he could play anything equivalent to what you were doing, without having to do it the way you were doing it. He wasn't following me. That's what blew my mind. He plays like that to this very day and I have no idea how he does it."

While Oenardo's not a subtle drummer by any means – he favours John Bonham-style physicality – his rhythmic drive adds a lot to his father's music, bolstering the raw energy of Ornette's speedy saxophone lines, and offering a melancholy if unsubtle approach to ballads. Coleman's relationship with his son is extremely close. Oenardo is his father's manager, too, booking tours and setting up interviews, rounding up musicians and making sure Ornette eats regularly. In a 1987 interview with writer Michael Jarrett, Ornette commented, "The reason why I'm playing more now is Oenardo's taking care of my business. I feel safer coming out. I've never had a relationship with a record executive. I always went to the record company by someone that liked my playing. Then they would get fired, and the record company wouldn't do anything for me. But Oenardo has been really helpful by solving that for me."

Early in the 1960s, Ornette expanded his instrumental repertoire. "I play the sax, the trumpet, the violin and one other instrument, sometimes the bass or a string instrument," he states, simply. He doesn't often solo on the trumpet – when I saw him live in 2006, he seemed to use it mostly to signal the group to change direction – but his violin playing is unique (in a non-pejorative sense). He scrawls the bow across the strings, producing a tortured, Gypsy-like wail that's untutored but clearly every bit as intentional as his saxophone lines. His solo on a version of "Friends And Neighbors", from the 1970 album of the same name, is a perfect example, rippling out of the main body of the music like a shocked cat jumping off a phone line. He's sanguine about his untrained approach to the trumpet and violin, which initially met with much derision within the jazz community – not just from critics, but fellow musicians, including Miles Davis, who wrote in his 1989 autobiography, "For him – a sax player – to pick up a trumpet and violin like that and just think he can play them with no kind of training is disrespectful toward all those people who play them well. And then to sit up and pontificate about them when he doesn't know what he's talking about is not cool, man." Ironically, in the very next sentence, Davis got close to Ornette's own open-eared philosophy. "But you know, music's all just sounds anyway."

"There's only really about eight different instruments that cover mostly the whole world," expands Ornette. "The piano's one, the guitar's one, the saxophone, the trumpet, the bass – there's not too many instruments. If I go to Europe and see an instrument I like, I can learn [it], if I like that sound."

It took Ornette until the latter half of the 1970s to embrace electric music, whereas players regarded as less forward-looking than him had plugged in by 1969, and very quickly made major innovations both rhythmic and sonic. The electronic space funk of Herbie Hancock's group Mwandishi, for example, is every bit as weird and awesome as anything Ornette recorded, and takes jazz in much more bizarre directions. To hear Ornette tell it, however, electricity isn't a compositional strategy, it's just a tool. "Whoever's playing the electric instrument is just needing the power of electricity to hear the sound, not make the idea," he says. "You make the idea from your heart and from your own emotion, but for the sound you have to use electronics to make it louder or softer. Like for me with the saxophone, I very rarely use a microphone with my sax unless someone puts it in front of me, but I can play loud enough for people to hear it where I am."

Yet when he did go electric with his group Prime Time, he brought something wholly unique to the jazz funk continuum. "Theme From A Symphony", the extended jamming piece that makes up the bulk of 1976's *Dancing In Your Head*, is a prime example (no pun intended) of Ornette's recycling of ideas: he was playing the main melody, then called "Tulli", on a 1968 European tour with a quartet of Haden, Izenzon and Blackwell (a two basses plus drummer configuration that mirrors his current group), he first recorded it as "School Work" on 1971's *Science Fiction*, and it then reappeared as "The Good Life" on the 1972 recording of the symphonic *Skies Of America*. It's a mantra-like line, which guitarists Bern Nix and Charles Ellerbee ride far out into the desert, while bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma and drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson keep the rhythm constant. This line-up released one more album, *Body Meta*, on which the funk was more jagged and the compositions more concise (even though it was recorded at the same sessions as *Dancing In Your Head*). On both discs, the musician least well served is Ronald Shannon Jackson, whose polyrhythmic attack, heard to such great effect behind Cecil Taylor and later in the 1980s with Last Exit and his own Decoding Society, feels somehow reined in by Ornette's harmolodic concept. He sounds like he's playing cardboard boxes instead of drums, and rattles along as the rest of the group flit about. When Denardo and fellow drummer Calvin Weston replaced Jackson on 1979's *Of Human Feelings*, Prime Time reached their peak. The interlocking guitars and twin drum kits created an utterly urban sound that wasn't indebted to Miles Davis's *On The Corner*, but seemed aware of it.

Ornette is as relaxed about composition as everything else. "I would say that if someone asked me to write a piece of music, any style, any way, I could probably do

"There's something about sound that actually soothes you. Say you cut yourself and put some salve on it – well, sound has that same effect without the medicine"

"I play things that heal people. You know what healing is? Something that brings tears and clarity to your heart. That's all I'm interested in"

that I could write symphonies. There's only 12 notes and you can only use it in a half or a whole step, so it's not a big deal to write music. When you speak of a third, you're speaking of a complete sound. When you're speaking of a whole step you're speaking of a movement. So that's not something you can stick your chest out about."

"I've been playing the saxophone since I was a teenager," he continues, "but I kept analysing, I kept trying to think, what is the difference between a note and an idea? A note has a name, but an idea only has a sound. What's the difference between both? If you take a C and you play it in a way that it's flat, it's no longer a C, it's probably turned into a B, if it's a half step down, or if it's a half step up it's turned into C sharp. Look at the ABCs, look at the seven notes in music. There's seven notes in music, there's 26 letters in the alphabet in English, but they serve the same purpose – to make something logical [so] a human being can understand what it means. But the sad part is, the whole idea of composing, or the whole idea of expressing different kinds of what we call styles – there's jazz and there's polka and there's so many – people are expressing their emotions through those styles, but they're still using the same notes. So that's why sound or music is so popular, because the vibration of sound doesn't tell you the name of the quality of what you hear, it only tells you the frequency of how it's affecting your emotions. It's like, I would rather be doing what I'm doing when I'm playing the saxophone, because not only can I play the interpretation of the word in a different sound, I can take the word and turn it into many different emotions – the same word. And that ain't too bad."

"Composing in the sense that I use it [means it's] the instrument that is the main ingredient of how it comes out. The violin, the saxophone, the trumpet and the bass – those instruments dominate all the qualities of what we call funk, classical, various names for different types of music, but it's played with the same instruments. Let's say the trumpet's in B flat, but the piano's in C. What's so amazing is the piano – that's a whole sound up higher, but it still sounds like one sound. The saxophone's in E flat and the piano's in C. That's a third and a half, almost a whole step above. But it's only that way because of the frequency of the vibration of the notes. There's no instrument that dominates another because of ideas I've seen people play the mouth flute and sound more precious than someone playing the violin."

"There's something about sound that actually soothes you," declares Ornette. "Like say you cut yourself and you put some salve on it, you know? Well, sound has that same effect without the medicine." This is a philosophy that guides much of his music making. Throughout our conversation, he returns to the theme of music as healing agent again and again, like a chorus of the blues. The other core concepts he works over as we talk are the nature of life – which he views as an external force animating the universe and all things within it – and the simultaneous ideas of freedom and equality. "I'm not an inventor or a creator of anything," he says. "I know how to write music and symphonies and all that kind of stuff, but when it comes to life I'm just another form on Earth, existing until I no longer can exist. And I'm not trying to put anybody down or climb above anybody. I'm not interested in controlling or killing. I'm not even interested in being rich or poor. What I'd like to achieve is – I was gonna say eternity with life, but life doesn't create people. The best form of [existence] is to not put a concept on life or to make a concept in your mind about it," he elaborates. "Whatever exists in what we call life, it knows us better than we will ever know it. I don't wanna be above and I don't wanna be below. I don't wanna be in any position where it's affecting someone else."

A statement like this leads anyone familiar with Ornette's music to begin revisiting the recordings and examining how such a philosophy of radical egalitarianism has fuelled his art for the past five decades. The obvious example is *Free Jazz* (1960), the 37 minute double quartet marathon that married unfettered improvisation to call and response, with the only guidelines being a predetermined order of solos and a few transitional phrases deployed as milemarkers. Such an unstructured place was, of course, dependent on its performers for its very nature, consequently, Freddie Hubbard sounds like Freddie Hubbard, Eric Dolphy sounds like Eric Dolphy, and Ornette and Don Cherry sound like themselves. This personality driven paradigm was revived in Prime Time, a group within which the core animating principle, according to the saxophonist, was "every man for himself".

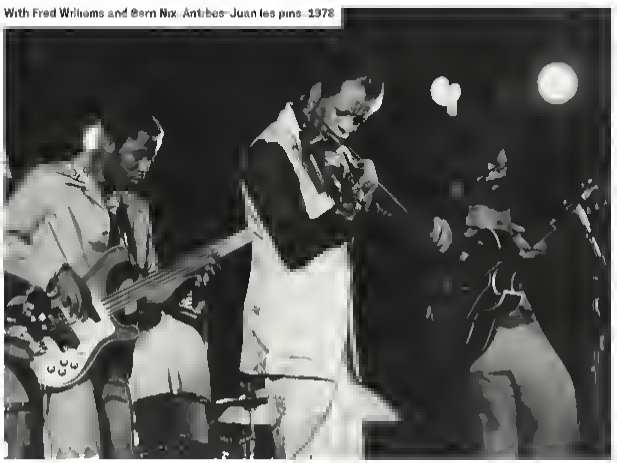
"I found that every person that played an instrument had a different way of feeling. But when you played collectively, it made the total become one," Ornette says of Prime Time. What remains unresolved in our conversation – and on the group's albums – is the conflict between the improvisational freedom he's after and the discipline demanded by the groove. Funk, after all, is a music built of strictly measured intervals and repeating cycles, drum and percussion patterns lie on top of one another, overlapping and adjusting, but ultimately remaining rock-steady. Rhythmic freedom is the death of funk. On Prime Time albums, the guitars and the bass, not to mention Ornette's horn – and, on *Virgin Beauty* (1988), keyboards that wouldn't have sounded out of place on Miles Davis's contemporaneous *Amandla* – weave in and out and around each other, but the drums are often practically a loop.

The clearest presentation of this conflict is on the 1967 double album *In All Languages*, because the juxtaposition of versions of seven different pieces – by the reunited quartet with Cherry, Haden and Blackwell on the first disc, then by Prime Time on the second – allows one to hear Ornette's musical thinking at its most unfettered and its most focused. The album's tracks are all short and punchy, the longest, the quartet version of "Space Church (Continuous Service)", comes in at only 4'34", and "Listen Up" is a mere 90 seconds. They're mostly built around hooky, melodic heads that provide a starting

With David Izenzon, London, 1965

Val Wilmer (London) Gérard Rouy

With Fred Williams and Bern Nix, Antibes-Juan les pins, 1978



block from which the group leap into high-speed improvisation until, seemingly out of nowhere, Ornette repeats the melody and, just like that, the race is over. When his then new quartet made their New York debut at Carnegie Hall in 2003, the methodology was very similar. Seated in one of the uppermost balconies, I recall thinking he might well have been emulating the hardcore punk approach taken by John Zorn on his Ornette tribute album *Spy Vs Spy*. On *In All Languages* this works very well for the quartet, as the music shifts and shimmers like mercury sliding on a hot skillet. But when the members of Prime Time attempt to sink their teeth into the same pieces, the results are chaotic, with too many players working at once, frequently at cross purposes. The dual guitars and basses tumble over each other like toddlers playing rugby, and the resolutely unswinging rhythms collide and crash to the floor in a heap.

By contrast, on the following year's *Virgin Beauty*, Prime Time were in impeccable form. By allowing the groove to dictate the terms – most obviously on "Happy Hour", a Country boogie, of all things – Ornette and his crew created music of fragility and force, a skinny dude that could lay you right out if and when you weren't paying attention. Even the presence of Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia on three tracks added something to the mix, as his spidery melodies danced within the lines instead of stretching them beyond tolerability, as he so frequently did (indeed, made a career of doing) with his own group.

After *Virgin Beauty*, though, Ornette took another one of his extended absences, not returning to the studio, or record store shelves, until 1995, when he began a promising if too brief flurry of activity. *Tone Dialing*, by a new version of Prime Time, extended the group's legacy without expanding it much, the presence of a body-piercing troupe onstage at a San Francisco concert overshadowed the music somewhat. He later told the *LA Weekly*'s Greg Burk, "I read this book on a tribe of people that were somewhere between Thailand and Cambodia. They had a religion where they would get in a state where they could pray, and then feel so complete that they could pierce themselves and walk on hot coals, and not one part of their body would be harmed, and their spiritual consciousness would be in a high state. And I said to myself, Wouldn't this be fantastic if I could find such a person that could do this, and have them on the same bill with us, and see if that consciousness would have the same effect on his audience? And I tell you, it was really unbelievable."

A set of paired discs, *Sound Museum: Hidden Man* and *Sound Museum: Three Women*, offered doubled versions of the same songs, recorded with an acoustic quartet featuring Charnett Moffett (son of Charles, who'd played with him in the 60s) and Geri Allen, in Ornette's first use of a pianist since Paul Bley in 1958. Perhaps the most interesting of this series of albums, though, was *Colors: Live in Leipzig*, a set of free duos with pianist Joachim Kühn. It really seemed like Ornette was embarking on a major new phase of his career. And then there were no more records for a decade.

Sound Grammar, the 2007 live album which won him a Grammy nomination and a Pulitzer, was recorded with Ornette's working band of the time: bassists Tony Falanga and Greg Cohen and Denardo on drums. As he'd done before, he included many reworkings of older compositions, among them "Sleep Talking" (a version of "Sleep Talk" from *Of Human Feelings*), "PP (Picolo Pesos)" from the *Sound Museum* albums, retitled "Matador", and a version of "Turnebout" retitled "Turnaround", as well as a triumphant run through "Song X", from the album of the same name made with guitarist Pat Metheny in 1985. The music had a haunting beauty, bolstered by the two bassists while Cohen plucked his strings, maintaining a strong bottom-heavy groove, Falanga bowed throughout, offering countermelodies to Ornette, who responded with great vitality and exactly the kind of "all contributions are welcome" attitude he describes in conversation.

Broadly speaking, it was cause for great rejoicing to have Ornette seemingly returning to prominence, with such a vital new group and a rigorous touring schedule. But when asked why, given his stature, he spends years at a time performing infrequently, he ascribes it to promoter apathy. "I can't tell a promoter, 'I'm coming here to play.' They have to tell you, 'OK, I want you to come and play'," he explains. "But I don't get lots of offers to do that, and I think the reason why is, people say, 'Oh, he's gonna come and blow things that are not gonna please people', or whatever. But I think of playing things that heal people. You know what healing is? Something that brings tears and clarity to your heart. That's as close as I can get. And that's all I'm interested in."

"If you ask me the most secret thing in the world, I will tell you. Because there's nothing I want to hide from anybody"

Despite the rapturous reception that's greeted his recent performances, Ornette may not feel he's achieving his goals. The group have been in flux, with electric bassist Al MacDowell (who was a member of Prime Time in the late 70s) joining in 2005 and now completely replacing the departed Cohen. When I ask whether he's planning to take them into the studio, he says: "I'm thinking about doing it. One of the things I haven't done is find the right temperature of people. Most of the guys that went in and I asked them to play, they'd say, 'Show me this', and then they'd do it. But they'd put it in the wrong place, more than the reason why I showed it to them. So they're letting me know that they're searching for something. I could write out all of the solos I've been playing, but that's not right." So perhaps he's still searching for the ideal combination of personnel? "I don't know. I have no idea how someone feels, but I can explain something when I hear someone."

In a possibly related spirit, he avoids the idea of taking the podium at an awards ceremony (in addition to the Pulitzer, he received a lifetime achievement Grammy in 2007 and was inducted into Jazz at Lincoln Center's Nesuhi Ertegun Hall of Fame the following year) and saying, in effect, 'I told you so'. Instead, he retains an essential humility, saying, "I just do what I know I can do and hope that someone is appreciating it." And he seeks this same self-awareness in bandmates. According to Ornette, he doesn't recruit people so much as they come to him, the way neighbours arrive on his doorstep and are always welcome. They might even perform, as a chorus of fellow residents in his Prince Street building did on the title track to 1977's *Friends And Neighbors*. If someone ends up in his group, "It's only because someone says, 'I'd like to come and play with you', or I hear someone who has a real beautiful emotion that when you hear it, it changes you from being depressed or whatever, but I don't look for it. When I hear it, I say, 'Oh, yeah, there it is'." But the fundamental quality he seeks in a collaborator, it seems, is artistic confidence, because that will allow the freedom he provides to be exploited to its fullest potential. "I don't know how to use something that doesn't know how valuable it is. And I don't wanna find out because I'm using them."

"Even the band I have, if I play, I prefer that," he continues. "And I will show them what I know about it just to be able to activate it freely. I don't have any secrets of what I do, because there aren't any. But there is something I do have, which is honesty of emotion. So I let that be my shield." But what does he do with a starstruck musician who wants to be instructed because after all, he's playing with the legendary Ornette Coleman, the man who tore up the rulebook and rewrote it? How do you free someone who willingly extends their wrists to be handcuffed? "I overcome that by playing a note that they can't resolve," says Ornette with a smile. "That's how I do it. And it works."

"I don't wanna be the best, I don't wanna be the worst, but I want to care about what we call life," he continues. "My mother told me, 'Go and practise', but [my parents] never tried to get me to be different or to learn something. My father died before I became a teenager, and my mother passed after I became a teenager. But neither of them ever made me feel like I had to change and be something I didn't want to be. They never inspired me to do anything for them that would change me into something I didn't like. They expected me to be human, but they didn't do nothing that changes whatever human is, or to make me think I was up here and people were under my feet. They weren't like that. I don't ever try to just play because I want to hear something. I'd rather play where the human being is receiving something that means something to him or to her. I don't wanna just get up and play notes and end up repeating myself."

"I don't have to be rich or poor. I don't have to be black or white to make a mistake, and I certainly don't want to control somebody because I can make them feel they're less human than someone else. I don't think that way. And if you ask me the most secret thing in the world, I will tell you. Because there's nothing I want to hide from anybody, or there's nothing I want to control by keeping some information from somebody."

When Ornette decides our conversation's over, he simply rises from the couch, practically mid-sentence, disappearing into the living quarters at the back of the apartment. When he returns, he beckons me into the music room, where he begins rooting around in a tall stack of papers. After a moment, he retrieves a copy of the sheet music to "A Girl Named Rainbow", a piece he's never recorded, but which Andrew Cyrille's group Maono (featuring trumpeter Ted Daniel, saxophonist David S Ware and bassist Nick DiGeronimo) played on their 1981 album *Special People*. He signs it with a string of large, carefully considered swirls and presents it to me. As I pack my gear and wait for the lift, he shakes my hand softly and says, "Stop by anytime" – an invitation I have every reason to believe is sincere.

In the days that follow our encounter, I mull over the experience, recalling the apartment, the conversation, the cake. Having interviewed Ornette once before, by phone in 2006, I wasn't blindsided by his rhetorical style, at once evanescent and opaque, yet I still feel like some crucial bit of understanding remains elusive – until, that is, I begin to come around to taking his statements at face value. He really wants to make people feel better after hearing his music than they did before. When you listen to as much Death Metal as I do, that can seem weird, even off-putting, like being approached by a smiling religious pamphleteer. But Ornette has no agenda beyond art. For more than 50 years, he's been having heart to heart conversations with anyone who'll listen.

"I have spent my life entertaining human beings," he concludes. "I find that they have made me have a much freer way of doing that, and the reason why is, for some reason, sound has a meaning, and it tells a story without any words. But you might go in a room and there are ten different people speaking ten different languages. So ... they have in common that they all like music." ☐ Ornette Coleman curates this month's Meltdown on London's Southbank. see Out There

Close & Far 15

Charlemagne Palestine & Christoph Heemann
Seiten In Flammen (Streamline)
James Ferraro
KFC City 3093 Pt 1 Toxic Spill (New Age Tapes)
Taiga Remains
Beneath The Weeping Beeches (Ekhein)
Zamph
The Undetermined Dyed (Volcanic Tongue)
Charalambides
Rose/Thorn (Kranq Industries)
Wet Hair
Infi (Night People)
Russian Tsarlag
Community Death Tube (Night People)
Three Legged Race
Living Order/Mourning Order (Tone Filth)
Ragiani
Dusk Ritual (Pegasus Farms)
Oren Ambarchi
A Fine Kiss On Poisoned Cheeks (Table Of The Elements)
Current 93
Birth Canal Blues (Cryptic Cat)
Jim O'Rourke
Despite The Water Supply (Touch)
Braxten/Graves/Parker
Beyond Quantum (Tzadik)
Tetsuya Nakatani
Primal Communication (H&H Productions)

Compiled by Nathan Cook Close/Far Recordings St Louis, USA close-far.com

The Office Ambience

Sonic Youth
The Eternal (Matador)
Moritz von Oswald Trio
Vertical Ascent (Honest Jons)
James Blackshaw
The Glass Bead Game (Young God)
SoiSong
xAj3z (soisong.com)
Gareth Williams & Mary Currie
Flaming Tunes (Life And Living)
Moeskus & Plank
Rostakraut Paste (Water)
MCH Band
1982–83 (Black Front Music)
Lou Reed's Metal Machine Trio
The Creation Of The Universe (Sister Ray Recordings)
Kabemimi IV
Desired Dog (No label)
JG Thirlwell
The Venture Bros: The Music Of JG Thirlwell (Adult Swim)
Mouthus
Divisions Is (Ecstatic Peace)
Biosphere
Wireless: Live At The Arnolfini Bristol (Touch)
Spunk
Kantarell (Rune Grammofon)
Medih
Beat Konducta Vi5: 6 (Stones Throw)
Astral Social Club
Psychic Smog 1–7 (Obiko)

Compiled by *The Wire* Sound System To hear a stream of our Office Ambience, go to thewire.co.uk

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows DJs, labels, musicians, bloggers, readers, etc Email a top 15 to charts@thewire.co.uk

Generation Bass Top 15

Bob Rum
Rap Da Silva (Sem Livre Brasil)
Filastine
Hungry Ghosts (Jarring Effects)
Panjaban
DS1 Remix (Bhangra Niche)
Mambo Infinito featuring La Mayor
Caje La Tuyo (No label)
Guanabanas
Chinga (Fonalguana)
Busy Signal
No Tracing (Pop Champagne Riddim)
DDP
Mambe Jumbo (Supplement Facts)
DJ Kennedy
Menge Ahy (No label)
DJ Chernobyl
Chetuba De Mesquita (No label)
RB Funky
Riddim Box (It's Funky)
Badany King
Mole Mole (EMI France)
DJ Furreta
Ola La Yeah (www.censiangela.net)
DJ MK
Sape (No label)
Mujava
Township Funk (TRG remix) (No label)
Knaan
ABC's (Gnowledge remix) (Gnowledge)

Compiled by Vincent Kereman www.generationbass.com

Out Of Stock 15

Bible Launcher
Bible Launcher (Tzadik)
Destroy All Monsters
1974–1976 (Ecstatic Peace/Father Yod)
Geeshie Wiley
All (Yazoo)
John Cage
Meets Sun Ra (Meltdown)
John Oswald
Plexure (Avant)
Julius Hemphill
Dogon AD (Mbari)
Klamm
Africa Raja (Klamm)
Hikashu
Hikashu (Toshiba Japan)
La Monte Young
Full discography
Les Baxter
Jungle Jazz (Capitol)
Pandit Pran Nath
Ragas Of The Morning & Night (Gramavision)
Pierre Henry
Machine Dance (Philips)
Sonny Sharrock
Ask The Ages (Axiom)
Sore Throat
Disgrace To The Corpse Of Sid (Earache)
Vagina Dentata Organ
Triumph Of The Flesh (WSNS)

Compiled by Retroriff retroriff.com

Pull the other one, it's got bells on Andy Meor's studio (see page 22)

Danielle van Ark

Reviews Index

Sonic Youth

Ghédalia Tazartès

Soundcheck 50–74

A–Z 50–63

Akron/Family 50
Tony Allen 50
alva noto & Ryuichi Sakamoto with Ensemble Modern 50
Laurie Scott Baker 50
Apricot My Lady 50
Ashar 50
Au Clair De La Luna 50
William Basinski 52
Black Flowers 52
James Blackshaw 52
Lawrence Casserley & Adam Linson 52
Dan Cherry 52
Chicks On Speed 52
Michael Cleis 53
Cracklaknab 53
Jim Denley & Kim Myhr 53
Digitalme 53
Bab Dawnas Open Music 53
Benedict Drew 53
Oub Echoes: Sonic Excursions In Oub And Beyond 54
Fabrique 54
Ernesto Ferreyra 53
The Field 54
Richard Garet & Brendan Murray 54
Groupshow 54
Robert Hampson 54
Hereppen Night Recordings 56
Erdem Helvacioğlu 56
Robert Hood 59
The Inner Space 56
Phillip Johnston 56
Junior Boys 56
Greg Kowalsky 56
Christof Kurzmann & Burkhard Stangl 56
L'Ocelle Mare 57
Radu Malfatti & Taku Unami 57
Jan Mueller 57
The Nether Dawn 57
Not Given Lightly 58
The One Ensemble Orchestra 58
Panamal 2: Latin Sounds, Cumbia, Tropical & Calypso Funk On The Isthmus 1967–77 58
Andrea Parkins 56
Phantom Limb & Earth's Hypnagogia 56
The Present 58
Lou Reed's Metal Machine Trio 51
Respect Sextet 60
Sissy Spacek 63
The Skull Defekts 60
and 60
SoiSong 60
Sonic Youth 60
Satoshi Senoda 60
Spectre 61
Spunk 61
Igor Strevinsky 61
Sun Circle 61
Sun Ra 61
Ghédalia Tazartès 62
Tasnaga: The Creation Of Youth 1911–1946 62
Tanniscoats 62
Tortoise 55
Trembling Bells 62
Greg Kelley & Alex Neilsen 62
Tussle 62
Peter Walker 62
Zach Wallace 61
John Wiese 63
Paul Wirkus & Mapstation 63
The World Is Shaking: Cubanisma From The Congo, 1954–55 63
Seymour Wright & Eddie Prévost 63

The Boomerang 64
Avant Rock 66
Critical Beats 87
Dub 68
Electronica 69
Hiphop 70
Jazz & Improv 71
Modern Composition 72
Outer Limits 73
Size Matters 74

The Inner Sleeve 75

Alex Neilson on Bob Dylan's *Planet Waves*

Print Run 76

This Ain't The Summer Of Love: Conflict And Crossover In Heavy Metal And Punk by Steve Waksman
I Got Two Wings: Incidents And Anecdotes Of The Two-Winger Preacher And Electric Guitar Evangelist Elder Utah Smith by Lynn Abbott
A Language Of Song: Journeys In The Musical World Of The African Diaspora by Samuel Charters
L'Underground Musical En France by Eric Deshayes & Dominique Grimaud

On Screen 78

High Rise ***Psychedelic Speed Freaks Live 1986*** DVD
Henri Paussaur: Hommage Au Sauvage DVD
Musically Mad DVD
Dengue Fever ***Sleepwalking Through The Mekon*** DVD
Dub Echoes DVD
Wilco ***Ashes Of American Flags*** DVD

On Site 80

Sound By Artists Paris, France
Sara Velas Los Angeles, USA

On Location 81

Donaufestival Krems, Austria
Ether 09 London, UK
MaerzMusik Berlin, Germany
Marco Cunningham with John Paul Jones/Takahisa Kosugi/Sonic Youth New York City, USA
Aaron Dilloway + Nate Young London, UK
PJ Harvey & John Parish London, UK
Planet Mu presents FILTH London, UK

Sebastian Agnetti (Tazartès)

Soundcheck A–Z

This month's selected CDs, vinyl and downloads

Akron/Family
Set 'Em Wild, Set 'Em Free
Crammed Discs/Dead Oceans CD/2×LP

Pennsylvania and New York based quartet Akron/Family's fourth album *Set 'Em Wild Set 'Em Free* revisits familiar ground – building acoustic and folk instrumentation to liberating choruses often hitting their sweet spot between the control structure and release of these elements. The gentle, plucked instruments of "River" retain their delicacy through the hearty vocal repetitions of the track's peak. "Everyone Is Guilty" ties their distinctive sinewy vocals to a thick trunk of a chorus not unlike *Love Is Simple*'s "Ed Is A Portal", but with a more assertive swagger.

Set 'Em Wild mostly sticks to this formula, but when they venture into alien territory at unexpected junctures more often than not the risk doesn't pay off. The jarring collapse of "Sun Will Shine" into the bizarre drawl of a brass-driven "Auld Lang Syne" feels careless and indulgently sentimental, a needless flourish spliced at the end of a track. The loose and grungey guitar noodlings of "MBF" swiftly descend into unconvincing extremities of furious feedback and screaming.

These divergences feel like an undercommitted attempt at branching out, as if straining into clothes that don't fit. The group appear bored with a well-worn formula, but their attempts to break with it ultimately fail. Thankfully, for the most part they stick to what they know.
Jennifer Allan

Tony Allen
Secret Agent
World Circuit CD

One can't help but speculate on the recent burst of output in Nigerian drummer Tony Allen's career. It's not as though there have been fluctuations in the quality of his recorded music. His earliest solo releases, such as *Jealousy* from 1975 or *No Accommodation For Lagos*, released three years later, confirmed his co-authorship of Afrobeat, whose invention is usually ascribed to the drummer's former bandleader, Fela Anikulapo Kuti. Those early Allen solo projects possess the same characteristics of classic Fela albums from the same period – above Allen's signature rhythms were a layer of intuitive ensemble playing, with lyrics at one with Fela's own political agenda.

Between the 1970s and the past decade there was little in the way of new Allen material. Could it be that it simply took that much time to outdistance Fela's ever lengthening, THC-scented shadow, his posthumous reputation as a populist firebrand on a par with that of Che Guevera? Whatever the reason, recent Allen projects of the order of his 2006 Honest Jon's release *Lagos No Shaking* and the new *Secret Agent* are both cause for celebration. The passage of time has altered little in his working methods thankfully, save for the improved clarity of his studio recordings.

Secret Agent features a polyglot ensemble culled from Allen's homeland in addition to Cameroon, Martinique and France. The components of his best work remain intact, seemingly contradicting one another yet melding into a wonderful whole: horn charts feigning then punching notes with a pugilist's intensity even as the drums and Allen's own vocals wax ever more seductively. Evidence of his restless creativity is never far from the surface. Afrobeat in his hands is a shapeshifting entity, willing and able to incorporate accordion and various synthetic textures without diluting its essential worth.
Richard Henderson

alva noto & Ryuichi Sakamoto with Ensemble Modern
Utp_
Raster-Noton CD+DVD

The third recorded collaboration between Carsten Nicolai and Ryuichi Sakamoto turns out to be their most ambitious, rigorous and, crucially, beautiful so far. *Utp_* is undersold by its typically utilitarian title. Commissioned by the city of Mannheim as part of its 400th anniversary celebrations, the piece manages to balance prerecorded electronics against live instrumentation – and structural certainties against stochastic impulses – with economy and considerable grace.

Physically, the Raster-Noton package is striking – the elegant die-cut sleeve, which contains two discs, a neatly printed visual score and a full colour booklet, seems initially like overkill. But whereas so many similar projects offer designer minimalism or lavish object fetishism to conceal their central void, every element here genuinely adds to the listener's understanding and appreciation of the music. Both CD and the DVD contain the same performance, recorded at the National Theatre in Mannheim towards the end of 2007, and both have something to offer. In the case of the DVD, it's Nigel Edwards's glowing high-definition visuals, which move in a liquid, ceaseless slow-motion flow across a taut, wide screen. The inclusion of the score is a masterstroke – offering a genuine insight into the compositional structure, it's uniquely absorbing.

The music combines motion and stasis. At times the Ensemble Modern play long-held, eloquent chords, at others they rustle and shiver like disconcerted insects, with col legno strings and softly rattling woodwind keys. Piano notes rise in stately, three-note steps, modulating the impact of the white noise that emerges periodically from Nicolai's hard disk. It's not always easy going – but for every bout of twitching chaos, there's a tentative, redemptive resolution. Taken as a whole, *Utp_* is a resonant and rewarding experience.
Chris Sharp

Apricot My Lady
Newly Refurbished And Tussock Moth
Esc Rec CD

The musical world of English improvisors Adem and Jonathan Bohman, who on this release contribute vocals, balalaika and assorted objects, is a fantastic assemblage of creaks and crunches, sounding like a couple of kids rummaging around in a toybox in the middle of the night trying not to wake mum and dad. But on *Newly Refurbished And Tussock Moth* there's plenty of room in the playpen for the delicate twitters of Anne la Berge (flute, electronics) and the guitar curlicues of guitarist Lukas Simonis, both of whom are based in the Netherlands.

The music is as elegant and fruity as the group name they've chosen for themselves. Its openness to anything, from recollections of a Bohman tonsillectomy ("My Rubber Gloves Leak") to oompah babyfart playpan pop ("The Usable Aspects"), harks back to the chaotic glory of English improv legends Alterations, but whereas they took perverse pleasure in colliding into each other like stylistic dodgem cars, nobody pushes anybody else about in Apricot My Lady. The average duration of the 18 tracks on *Newly Refurbished And Tussock Moth* is about two and a half minutes, but many feel longer then they actually are – there's enough gurgling, rustling, grunting and fizzing on "Wavy Socks" to keep most improvisors busy for an entire album. And yet, miraculously, events seem to unfold at a leisurely pace throughout, a comfortable midtempo between traditional improv's nervy chatter/clatter and electroacoustic improvisation's "hmm, now what shall I play next?" adagio.
Dan Warburton

Asher
Miniatures
Sourdine 2×CD

Two CDs, 26 tracks, no individual titles. The only information recorded in Somerville, MA, winter 2007. Rumours and mysteries proliferate in a data vacuum, and *Miniatures* puts the listener into a state of suspension and suspicion. What exactly are we listening to? Who made it? What does 'making' it mean in this context, and what sense of 'recorded' is being used?

Let's consider the audio facts, such as they are. Even here there is veiling – all the tracks are covered in a fog of crackle. You're put in mind of Philip Jeck, Burial or The Caretaker, but this sounds more like static or interference than vinyl crepitation. The music is far more circumscribed, both in mood and instrumentation, than Jeck or The Caretaker's montages: it is mostly piano, although occasionally strings, too, and the piano is contemplative, reflective, exquisitely sad. The lugubrious tempo seems to literalise the notion of longing. The haze of the crackle and the quietness of the playing mean that you have to 'lean in' to hear the music – played on iPod headphones, it practically disappears into the background noise of the street.

At least two theories are circulating online as to how the discs were made. One, the closest there seems to be to any official story, maintains that the tracks on *Miniatures* were all short sections recorded by Boston based musician Asher from the radio and then digitally looped. If so, he should buy himself a radio with better reception. The other theory is that the piano pieces were played by Asher on poor quality tape, then subjected to further processes of digital distortion to give the impression that they are found sound objects. The unresolved status of the tracks is not some dry conceptual riddle detracting from the experience of listening to them; instead, the enigma actually heightens the music's fragile, fragmentary beauty, its uncanny intimacy.
Mark Fisher

Au Clair De La Lune
Various
Infrequency 2×CD

In 1857, Parisian inventor Edouard-Leon Scott de Martinville patented his phonautograph, a device that converted the sound of human speech into marks inscribed on a cylinder coated with lampblack. On 9 April 1860 – 17 years before Thomas Edison's "Mary Had A Little Lamb" – Scott de Martinville used it to record a girl (his daughter?) singing the first couplet of "Au Clair De La Lune", but it wasn't until last year that scientists in California were able to transform the thin lines back into audio, allowing us to hear all ten scratchy seconds of the world's oldest sound recording for the first time.

To celebrate this momentous event, Canadian sound artists Jamie Drouin and Lance Olsen have invited seven other composers to join them on a compilation of works based on the 1860 recording. Together, they take it on quite a journey, from an amusement arcade on Olsen's "The Creature That Drank Sound" to the depths of outer space on Sleep Research Facility's "Dark Side Of The Lune", which revisits the alien darkness of 2001's *Nostromo* (and is much more imaginative than its title). In Lionel Marchetti and Yôko Higashi's typically evocative "Short Story", the recording appears unadorned as a poetic postscript, while in Stephen Vitiello and Molly Berg's annoyingly jangly "Claire Song Sung" and Steve Roden's irritatingly slight "Ancla Irdu Lalu Ne", it is chopped up and buried under layers of quivering keyboards. Little more than a ghostly filter on Christophe Charles's "Breathe", it's atomised, stretched out and transformed beyond all recognition in the more extended offerings by Drouin and Yann Novak.

The most impressive piece is "Les Voix Du Passé/Chantent L'Avenir/Clair De Lune", the first offering from Bernhard Günter in two years, which retains the fragile melodic

Lou Reed's Metal Machine Trio
The Creation Of The Universe
Sister Ray Recordings 2×CD/Download

Lou Reed has recently started to re-acquaint himself with the aspects of his muse that established his reputation as an influence on at least two generations of Noisicians and experimental guitarists. 2006 saw him performing in various improv settings with John Zorn, whose Tzadik label released a particularly eye-opening set at his club The Stone featuring himself, Reed and Laurie Anderson. And following reeds player Ulrich Krieger's scoring of *Metal Machine Music* for the German Zeitkratzer ensemble, which was released on disc with Reed's participation in 2007, he has made the connection with his early musical concerns explicit by naming his new unit with Krieger and Sarth Calhoun (who employs live electronics and a MIDI instrument known as the Continuum Fingerboard) Metal Machine Trio, after his most maligned release.

The reason *Metal Machine Music* was so controversial in its day is down to the circumstances surrounding its release. In 1975 Reed was being touted as a proto-punk post/auteur, equal parts Iggy fuck-up and Dylaneaque visionary. He was public property for the rock establishment, who could only interpret Reed's work within the context of their agenda. Could it be that the reason *MMM* was so vilified had less to do with its supposedly unbearable sonic extremity than the fact that there were no songs on it, nothing that demonstrated any intention on Reed's part to play the rock discourse game? If he had released an album of Ambient drift (which, weirdly, he recently did with 2007's *Hudson River Wind Meditations*), I'll wager it would have garnered a similar response.

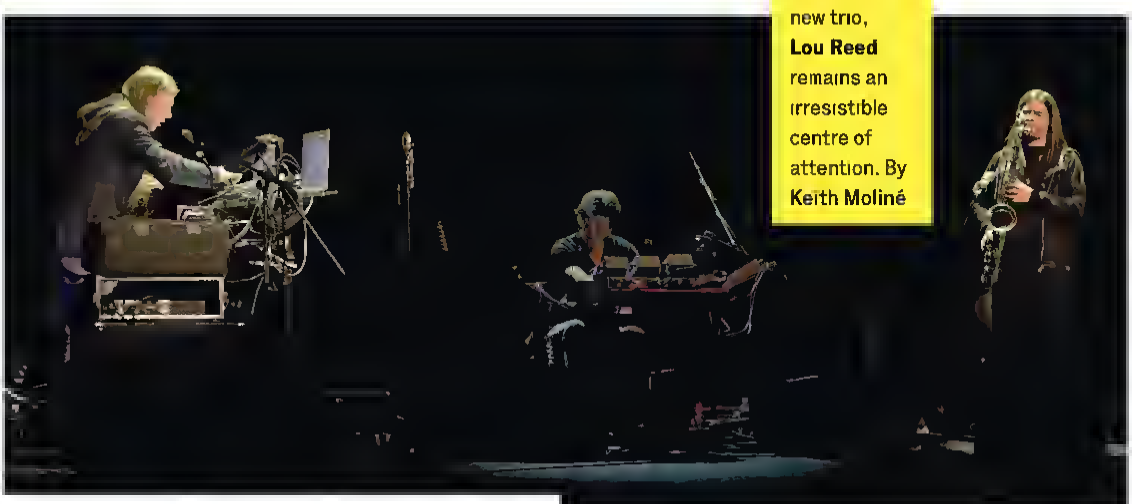
MMM is actually pretty approachable compared to, say, The Velvet Underground's "European Son", which is like a chainsaw fight with a song breaking out in the background, or the bulk of *White Light/White Heat*, an album that still sounds more nerrowingly bruised and bloated by distortion than... well, just about everything. *MMM* showed Reed trying to reconnect with the primal drone-improv he had helped forge with the original Velvets a decade earlier, but the universal hostility with which it was greeted made it clear that this was a reconnection that nobody – neither the industry bosses, nor the critics, nor his audience – were going to allow him to make.

So for the best part of three decades Reed was obliged to ignore that whole crucial dimension of his aesthetic, the exploration of extreme sonic states. Sure, there were traces here and there – the guitar-synth fumblings on *The Bells*, the six-string duels with Robert Quine in *The Blue Mask* era, the indulgence in textural sheen and density on *Magic And Loss*, the bizarrely ragged, protracted riffing on "Like A Possum" from 2000's *Ecstasy*, the tentative Noise vignette "Fire Music" on 2003's *The Raven* – but it wasn't easy to make a direct musical connection between this Lou Reed and the one that had once committed one of the most feral guitar workouts ever heard to tape on 1968's "I Heard Her Call My Name". Where he has evinced an interest in pure sound, he's shown a weirdly muso-traditionalist bent, hence his ever-expanding monster pedalboard and full-time guitar technician on hand to help him set up the FX patches. It's a world away from the pre-Velvets novelty pop records he cut for the Pickwick label like "Do The Ostrich" on which he tuned all his guitar strings to the same note to produce a bludgeoning wall of treshy distortion.

Leaving aside his continued weakness for hi-tech hardware, the question is whether Reed can do justice to a musical legacy that has been neglected for too long, not least by himself. It's heartening to see him getting his hands dirty again, but let's be clear here. *The Creation Of The Universe* (what a title!) is not a live re-imagining of the blest of conceptual noise that was *Metal Machine Music*. This self-released album, documenting two live concerts in Los Angeles in late 2008, features Reed as serious improv guitarist, end in the company of the fearsomely gifted and intense Krieger, he's really setting himself up for a fall. When Reed flailed around for 17 minutes on The Velvets' "Sister Ray" back in 1968, he was essentially making a single gesture over and over again, and the amount of attention the listener paid to each moment was irrelevant to the music's conceptual scheme. But *The Creation Of The Universe* invites the listener to concentrate on the music's unfolding structure by attending to the instrumental details moment by moment. Krieger is predictably dazzling, Calhoun is a discreet and effective colourist. How about Lou?

Well, he's extraordinary. Not in the sense that he's impressively dextrous, nor that he demonstrates the inquisitiveness, invention and speed of response of a great improvisor. Nor is he overwhelmingly cacophonous – though he does kick up a right shitstorm here and there. What he is able to do is project his famous wilfulness and bloody-minded insistence on doing things his way. He's so brutally pigheaded it's breathtaking. One minute he'll be picking away lazily at an arpeggio, waiting until his cohorts have developed a sympathetic idea, when he'll suddenly decide to shift into a chugging power riff, leaving his fellow players high and dry. Then he'll allow the tension and volume to build, before abruptly cutting to a hushed, half-formed motif played through some slightly cheesy effect. Reed doesn't do chaos anymore; nowadays it's all about control, having the authority to do exactly the wrong thing whenever he pleases. The commonly invoked notion of the improvising ensemble as a perfect social microcosm is casually, perhaps cruelly disavowed by Reed in his performance, but the ensuing human drama, as Krieger and Calhoun desperately seek ways to paper over the cracks, is by turns hilarious, exciting and moving. It's a maddening listen at first, but slowly the penny drops: this isn't Lou Reed trying to fit into the world of free improv. It's him trying to get free improv to fit into the world of Lou Reed. □

Reconnecting with his primal instincts in a new trio, Lou Reed remains an irresistible centre of attention. By Keith Moliné



Amy Beth McNeely

Metal Machine Trio in New York City, April 2009 (left to right): Sarth Calhoun, Lou Reed, Ulrich Krieger

line in the background as a reference point while exploring the recording's spectral – in both senses of the word – resonances, with extraordinary results. Striking just the right balance between intellect and emotion, it's as inscrutable and moving as the tiny fragment of history that gave birth to it.
Dan Warburton

William Basinski
92952
2D62 CD
Most famous for his *Disintegration Loops* series, in which he decided to make a musical virtue of the decayed state of a collection of tape loops he had made in the early 1980s, Los Angeles based William Basinski has created an extraordinary body of work based on the simple but devastatingly effective idea of revisiting his old material and highlighting its exposure to the passage of time. Here, he takes as his raw matter a series of recordings – minimal, repetitive but insistently haunting electronic pieces – made in Brooklyn in September of 1982 (hence the title), which he remastered this year. "92952.1" ostensibly does little more than oscillate, like a rocked cradle or a branch swaying in a balmy breeze. However, blotched with ancient, grainy reverb, it unleashes a quiet mass of micro-detail: of glitches and sores and character details accrued down the decades. At one point, the volume cuts away, then is restored – naturally. Basinski doesn't 'clean' away such a moment in the remastering; he preserves it.

The last track "92952.3" is the least distressed, most lucid, while the antique piano musings of "92952.4" will be familiar to those who own Basinski's *Variations A Movement In Chrome Primitive*, as it's a version of the eighth piece.

"92952.2" vividly evokes the conditions in which it was made. The ostensibly Ambient strains of the piece are flooded out by the actual ambience wafting in through the Brooklyn window on that warm autumn evening: the sweet, heavy New York City air carrying with it the sounds of police sirens, helicopter rotor blades and what you hope are fireworks popping in the background. This is a shameless but quite sublime strain of nostalgia, on one level driven by a simple desire to be young once more. On another, however, it points up both the finite and the infinite qualities of music: the reality of decay but also of the loop as symbol of eternity.
David Stubbs

Black Flowers
I Grew From A Stone To A Statue
Bo Weavil CD
Black Flowers' fiery version of Richard Thompson's ingnbrious "Calvary Cross" is a potent antidote to some of the more anodyne tendencies in 21st century folk. Lavinia Blackwall's impassioned vocal performance takes vertiginous leaps at the end of each verse. What follows is a darkly psychedelic instrumental section in which her organ playing interweaves with Mick Flower's abrasive guitar and Alex Neilson's dextrous free drumming.

The sleevenotes to this first album by Black Flowers, whose shifting personnel includes Neilson, Blackwall, Flower and Alasdair Roberts, suggest a free folk blueprint in which the voice can be "central but not authorial" and likely to reach "beyond meaning, beyond its own corporeality". The following track, "Hot Crosses – Black Flowers" demonstrates that what sounds great on paper is not always so easy to achieve sonically. Its wordless, chant-like vocal cadences over an abstract instrumental improvisation get increasingly weary as the track progresses, like a boozy singsong. Over this, Neilson sings some lyrics in uncertain pitch, while Blackwall vainly tries to drag the whole thing back to life with some vocal gymnastics. If, like Black Flowers, you want to let voices off the leash, you've at least got to sing in tune or it will sound as dismal as this.

A similar track, "... And The Words Fell Like Melting Blossom", is more successful, like an amorphous Gregorian chant, but it still makes you wonder if free folk isn't an oxymoronic term – that if you lose its structure completely you aren't left with much. Indeed, the group's take on traditional songs is far more successful. Roberts plays guitar and duets with Blackwall on a gritty version of "Polly On The Shore", while she plays harp on the balmy "Sweet Rivers Of Redeeming Love".
Mike Barnes

James Blackshaw
The Glass Bead Game
Young God CD
British guitarist James Blackshaw's music is unabashedly Romantic, ripe with tender feeling. It's what made him such a good counterfoil to the mannered Americana of the Fahey worshippers – where they were timid, Blackshaw wore his heart on his sleeve; his shimmering broken chord cycles decked in lush, open harmonies.

But on *The Glass Bead Game*, Blackshaw seems to have lost the lightness of touch that stopped his Romanticism descending into sentimentality. Aspiring to serious composer-hood, he overinflates his arrangements with classical pretension. Parts of *The Glass Bead Game* wouldn't sound out of place between John Rutter and Peter Hurford on a Classic FM playlist – the maudlin, churchy intro to "Bled", for instance, or the opener "Cross", once it gets sickly-sweetened with orchestral strings and choir. Blackshaw can be incredibly heavy-handed – on "Fix" he slinks a would-be elegant, Bachian aria for strings by hammering out triads on the piano, beating you round the head with the chord changes.

There are some beautiful moments on *The Glass Bead Game*, but they mostly take place within his comfort zone. "Bled", when it gets going, is classic Blackshaw: a luminous and nimbly rippling mantra, while "Key", a Baroque-style solo guitar piece, is slower, sombre and pretty. Both benefit from the simplicity of their arrangements. The most ambitious track here, the Charlemagne Palestine-inspired 18 minute finale "Arc", is also mostly successful. Blackshaw transfers his guitar strategies to the piano, opening up the sustain pedal and rippling like crazy, swallowing up the stereo in a hive of caroming overtones. Sadly, the clouds part towards the end. Blackshaw's left and right hands at opposite ends of the piano, leaving a glaringly vacant midrange.

It's all happened far too fast for Blackshaw. Hailed as the saviour of fingerpicking while still in his early twenties, he has worked to evolve at an extraordinary rate, flirting with classical minimalism and chamber orchestration, recently interrogating Renaissance lute modes with Josef van Wissem (as Brethren Of The Free Spirit). But *The Glass Bead Game* suggests he might be better served by a bit of patience; some time to let his composition skills catch up with his ambition.
Nick Richardson

Lawrence Casserley & Adam Linson
Integument
Psi CD
Integument is a cross-generational dialogue between two musicians who met in the context of Evan Parker's Electro-Acoustic Ensemble. Adam Linson is a strong and technically refined Californian double bassist now resident in Berlin, where this music was recorded in May 2007. He grew up computer-literate during the 1980s and became seriously interested in live processing while studying with George Lewis in San Diego. Lawrence Casserley's involvement with electroacoustic music dates back to the late 1960s. He has interpreted Stockhausen scores, done inspired work with sound poet Bob Cobbing and performed in a variety of improvising situations. Here he uses a signal processor to enhance and extend the sound of Linson's instrument.

They aim for a kind of musical symbiosis. Linson pinpoints the key issue in his accompanying notes: congratulating Casserley for using his bass playing as a source, rather than a mere resource. It's a mutually enriching arrangement, transcending any uncomfortable sense of host and parasite that the relationship of instrumentalist and processor might superficially suggest. To my ears, that mutuality wasn't adequately realised in *Solar Wind* (Touch), Casserley's 1997 duet with Evan Parker. On this occasion, though, Linson's bowed bass retains its core identity even as it undergoes transformation, sturdy enough to grow within the powerful digital crosscurrents. Linson reports that he found out new things about his own playing during the session. One couple of tracks he complicates matters with his own processing input, without muddying the flow. Casserley's approach doesn't generate much warmth, but it can open up impressive vistas – and with Linson's collusion it does just that.
Julian Cowley

Don Cherry
Live At Cafe Montmartre 1966 Volume Three
ESP-Disk CD
Don Cherry's month long residency at Cafe Montmartre in Copenhagen fell between the recording of his first two releases as a bandleader, *Complete Communion* and *Symphony for Improvisers*. This inspired and previously unavailable session, from 3 March 1966, contains two compositions ostensibly from the still new *Communion*, but shows Cherry and his quartet taking tremendous liberties with the material. True to his spoken introduction to "Remembrance", in which he refers to the group's approach as "the suite form in which we play", both numbers move through long sequences of themes and moods, starting with statements of the original tunes' melodies and heading outward quickly from there.

In the preceding six years or so, Cherry had played with John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman and Albert Ayler – an impressive career for someone just turning 30. But it's Ornette and Ayler whose influences seem strongest here. The former's hermolodics can be heard in the parallel or duelling, melodies played by Cherry (trumpet) and Gato Barbieri (tenor sax) – and then there are stretches where the quartet put on their Fire Music hats for the kind of manic blowing that Cherry had participated in on Ayler's *New York Eye And Ear Control* in 1964. The session is wild, infectiously joyful and free in just about every sense. But underneath it all Cherry's bebop roots are still showing in the compositions' melodies and nods to traditional head-and-solo structure, which makes this feel like an important transitional recording bridging late bop and the total liberation of the 1960s. Still, notwithstanding their unusual multinational line-up (Argentina, Germany, Denmark, Italy), there's little hint of the arguably even more radical World Music elements that became Cherry's preoccupation a few years later.
Dave Mandl

Chicks On Speed
Cutting The Edge
Chicks On Speed 2×CD/2×LP
Given their tirelessly righteous proselytising and steadfast refusal to sell out or shut up, it could be argued that Chicks On Speed, though hardly a hip name to drop these days, are a more vital and important cultural entity than, say, LCD Soundsystem – they're rather less likely to suck up the Nike dollar to boot.

Also, on this latest double length opus, they've embraced pop more readily and successfully than ever before. The pace is set by opener "Girl Monster", which layers a stiff electro pulse with early Beach Boys harmonies to great effect, and the vocals, whether delivered solo, harmonised, or in unison, interlock with the uptight electronic pulses to create a cogent statement of defience over the two discs. Those with little patience for the didactic will no doubt find the constant agit-pop hectoring heavy going, but it's hard to disagree with the Chicks' pointed critiques of the vanity and venality of art, fashion and popular culture, and the sustained momentum of this album is impressive.

A couple of tracks also articulate the psychological distress engendered by what they term *"a desperate world"* with grim accuracy, most notably the one-two punch of "Extended Paintbrush" and "Globocop" (the

letter co-produced by Mark Stewart) on the first disc. There's too much music here for sure, but perhaps that's the point. *Cutting The Edge* is highly persuasive, a timely reminder that dissent is a human impulse that can and should be enjoyed, rather than endured.
Joseph Stannard

Michael Cleis
La Mezcla
Cadenza 12"
Digitaline
Trapadako EP
Cadenza 12"
Ernesto Ferreyra
Siluetas
Cadenza 12"
The endlessly elongated electronic House music on these latest releases from Luciano's Berlin based Cadenza label overwhelmingly speaks of dissolution. While the beats tick and tap along tirelessly, the sounds and echo effects almost without exception curve downwards, trickle into crevices or fizz away into the air like moans, sighs or even yawns. There is a sense of constant disappearance, as if the escape from the quotidian in the 72 hour club and after-party merry-go-rounds which this stuff soundtracks were not enough and the productions were trying to abdicate from physical reality itself.

On the Italian-Swiss Michael Cleis's releases, Latin percussion loops are drawn out for ten minutes at a time over standard House beats, vaguely Technoid pads and bass rising and falling through untold steady undulations. Fellow Swiss artist Laurent Bovey aka Digitaline's EP is far more openly synthetic, its "Strippy Trippy" pouring traceries of bubbling liquid acid over a flexing framework of chrome-plated New Jersey Garage shuffle. Argentine-Canadian Berliner Ernesto Ferreyra delivers the most funk of the set in his craftily zippy Microhouse.

If none of this sounds wildly enthusiastic, it's not because the music lacks quality. They are all exceptionally well-executed pieces of rhythmic psychedelia. It's simply that effervescent excitement would be the wrong response to the elegantly world-weary decadence of these accoutrements of professional hedonism.
Joe Muggs

Crackleknob
Crackleknob
hetOLOGY CD
Mary Halvorson *likes* making records, not because she can put lots more in, but because the studio gives her time to take out what isn't needed. Having made a stir in various Braxton groups, the guitarist is amassing an impressive discography of her own, last year's *Dragon's Head* on Firehouse 12, an attractively silly documentation of her vocal duo with violist Jessica Pavone called *Thin Air*, a more measured account of that partnership with rhythm players Devin Hoff and Ches Smith on *Calling All Portraits*, surreal rock with drummer Kevin Shea as People, a string of upcoming gigs and walk-on parts.

Crackleknob's a collaboration, not another Halvorson trio. Trumpeter Nate Wooley and bassist Reuben Radding also make most impact when they play least, which is why occasional bursts of virtuosity have even greater impact. The group have been around long enough to let some of the sparer tracks drift into companionable silence, gappy lean improvs like "Libidinous Objects And The Decay Of Self" or the mournful, edgy "Caldwell 1925". At first you might think nothing very much is going on, then you realise the most interesting passages are those which have been trimmed down to just a couple of plucked strings, unanchored bass notes and lonely brass breaths and cries. The action's in the intervals and in the spatial distribution of sound, but there's a solid architecture to each piece. Halvorson was initially drawn to the dark, woody sound of contrabass – even at its spikiest, her sound almost always reaches down rather than up – and claims Dolphy and Monk as main influences rather than other guitar players.

Even when her name's on the marquee, she still plays for the group, and here the internal relationships are so confident that one instinctively takes it as read that the unrelated lines of "The Cadence Of Her Dying Breath" will eventually make sense. And they do.
Brian Morton

Jim Denley & Kim Myhr
Systems Realignment
Either/OAR CD
At 52, saxophonist and flautist Jim Denley is Australia's most important improvising musician, similar in spirit to Ross Bolleter in that his creative language both recognises the symbolic import of colonial detritus – Denley and collaborator Peter Ready used to make "New Music Constructions" out of industrial junk – and also the essential irrelevance of both European art music and American jazz to the Australasian experience. Since returning home from Europe in the late 1970s, Denley has applied himself to a naturalistic idiom on saxophone and flute that makes Eric Dolphy's moves in that same direction seem tentative.

There are echoes in these duets with guitarist Kim Myhr of Denley's early 80s work in Relative Band, which was essentially a duo with Jon Rose. The basic palette is spiky, and each individual track is deceptively formless, but it's impossible to miss the long, slow pulses that run through each piece, giving them all a satisfying logic, or indeed the didgeridoo and hollow-log effects that lend the music an immediately identifiable provenance. Bolleter has talked about the characteristic effect of Denley's music as a process of instantaneous transformation in which individual sounds don't signify anything other than the processes of change. Denley's use of electronics and Myhr's "simple mechanics" extend and enhance that impression on "Flurried Plainsong", "Sonic Rockart" and the title track in particular.

Two tracks, "Original Sing" and "Deconsingsong", were recorded at a separate session and are subtly different, but together with "The Singing Neanderthal" they convey a sense that Denley is after a kind of sonic vernacular that plugs into what can only crudely be called a collective unconscious. He's convinced that our rational and intuitive selves are now in a thoroughly dysfunctional relationship. Music like this helps to realign them.
Brian Morton

Bob Downes Open Music
Crossing Borders
Reel Recordings CD
Open Music began as a trio in 1968, led by Bob Downes, player of multiple flutes and occasionally saxophones, other woodwinds and percussion. Best known for the jazz rock fusion of 1970's *Electric City*, Downes was ensconced in an early 70s scene which found him working with the likes of Ray Russell, John Barry, Mike Westbrook and Keith Tippett. Open Music's recorded legacy remains sporadic, which makes this discovery, by Canadian label Reel Recordings, especially welcome: five tracks from two sessions recorded in London in 1978 and 79, which also featured, among others, bassist Barry Guy, drummer John Stevens, trombonist Paul Rutherford and ex-Blossom Toes electric guitarist Brian Godding.

Much of the material on *Crossing Borders* is touched by Downes's experiences of travel in South America. "Jungle Chase" begins with some scuttering acrobatics on Downes's Columbian pan flute, which transports the instrument far from its "Flight Of The Condor" cliché, and after 13 minutes Downes starts ululating like some forest shaman. "South American Indian" is Downes alone puffing away on a thickly reverbed bass flute. "Sad Senorita" and "Che Guevara" notably remind you that John Stevens, the freest of the free, could hold down a groove with the best of them when called on.

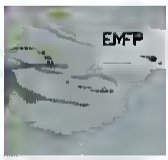
As well as adding a previously unheard code to the Open Music story, these tapes – poised at the intersection of the freer side of modal jazz, non-idiomatic improv, and the kind of spacey, ECM-friendly One World ethnoforgery proposed by the likes of Collin Walcott – hold out a glimpse of pathways British jazz never quite followed up.
Rob Young

Benedict Drew
A Folding Table
No label Download
Upon agreeing that his solo album didn't represent their current direction, Benedict Drew and Mark Westell of the Confront label made the novel decision to *not* release it. After spending two years making an album, it takes artistic honesty to admit you've hit a dead end, especially when no one seems to self-edit very much anymore.

Now offered for free download from Drew's website, the title refers not to the music's source material, but to his need, as a festival organiser in the UK, for folding tables. He also suggests that it describes how the music continually collapses, expands and shifts around. The structural metaphor is interesting, but it's the notion

Subscriber Special

With this month's issue all *The Wire*'s subscribers will receive a free copy of an exclusive CD of new Polish music.



Exploratory Music From Poland Vol 1

To mark Polska! Year, which consists of more than 200 events taking place in the UK throughout 2009 that will showcase various aspects of contemporary culture from Poland, the AudioTong Foundation and Adam Mickiewicz Institute have put together this exclusive compilation of new Polish music. From free improvisation to experimental electronics, noise to avant garde jazz and electronica, the CD gives an ear-opening insight into the vibrant state of contemporary Polish sonic art.

The CD is given away to all subscribers with copies of this month's June issue.

audiotong.net, polskayear.pl

For information on how to subscribe to *The Wire* turn to page 100 or go to thewire.co.uk/subscribe

of the search that is most relevant. The three pieces form a labyrinth without centre that Drew has to feel his way out of.

The heavy Max/MSP processing of digital and concrete sources is entirely familiar, and a recognisable penumbra of grainy digital static haunts many sections. There are radio signals and feedback recordings of trains, insect chirps, and other low-level domestic noise, snatches of strings, piano clusters and metallic percussion, as well resonating tubes and scraping wind tunnel ambience. The dynamic range is wide and an arsenal of formal strategies features – the jump-cut micro-edits, short drones, noisy density, near silence.

What lifts this familiarity from tedium is palpable urgency: the unceasing compression, transformation and release of sound sources comes off not as laboriously constructed, but as inventive and improvised. It feels spontaneous, openended, held aloft by a willingness to explore multiple streams of thought without knowing that anything will result. If it feels restless, inconclusive and exhausted, like an end as well as a beginning, it should. After spending two years making *A Folding Table*, Drew has decided to set off in a new unknown direction. The search, it seems, continues.

Matthew Wuethrich

Dub Echoes: Sonic Excursions In Dub And Beyond

Various

Soul Jazz 2×CD

If one takes reggae's first version B sides as the original stirrings of dub, then dub as a musical process has been around for almost 40 years. Copied, spliced and exchanged countless times since then, dub these days doesn't propagate through the kind of primal reverberations alluded to by the title of *Dub Echoes* – the album companion to Bruno Natal's documentary of the same name (reviewed in On Screen, page 78) – as much as through countless mouse clicks and cut and pastes. Dub in its various manifestations can be an anonymous musical template as much as a sound with Roots.

While the tracks on *Dub Echoes* give a sense of how far dub has travelled – two modern highlights are the silky pressure of Rhythm & Sound and Cornell Campbell's "King In My Empire" and the contrastingly stooped circuit abuse of Disrupt's "Sega Beats" – there's not a whole lot of common ground between the various generations and genres represented here. The 1970s tracks, represented by Lee Perry's "Congo Men Chant" and "Rejoicing Skank" and King Tubby dubs including "Ruffer Version" and "Psalms Of Drums", are perfect examples of dub's easy otherworldliness, with wormholes opening up in the tracks with every tweak of the echo box. Harmonic 313's "Dirtbox" and Digital Dubs Vs Dubterrain's "Deb Dub" are flat and linear, aesthetically almost conservative. If the dub virus has spread far and wide, then perhaps its at the expense of weakening the strain.

If the main impetus of dub was the power of the copy, then the primary main inheritor of its magpie spirit here is "Sign Rhythm", produced by Andre "Suku" Gray of the Jammy's stable and later Ward 21 where disparate elements of steel drums, Indian subcontinent melodies and modern Bollywood rhythms mesh together like a finely tuned engine. Generally, *Dub Echoes* is simply a workmanlike cross section of dub practices through the ages, the old and new, the raw and the cooked.

Derek Walmsley

Fabrique

Various

Room40 CD

This compilation marks the end of a long running performance series in Brisbane, Australia curated by Room40's Lawrence English, which aimed to sample international approaches to "contemporary sound". While not all the tracks were recorded live, the compilation celebrates 18 artists who performed at these shows since 2001. And like all such things, they're a little bit of a mixed bag, but on reflection, perhaps not mixed enough.

The real problem is the preponderance of 'digital artists' – people for whom digital tools are the central plank of their work. Frankly, that's a poor raison d'être for a creative practice. No more than the statement 'all cellists are good' is necessarily true, using sound files is not a definition of interesting practice. With computers, like traditional instruments, there is an established technique that can lead to predictable outcomes, as well as alternative approaches for the more adventurous minority.

Some of those known primarily as instrumentalists do stand out. The likes of David Grubbs, Chris Abrahams and Ulrich Krieger manage to shake off the air of politely well-scrubbed audio. Increasingly today we are expected to admire soundscapes that have been "crafted" to the point where any real sense of place and corporeal sound source has leached away. And frankly much of this consists of sterile mouse exercise routines that are the audible equivalent of looking at a breathtaking view through a window covered in tracing paper.

I wanted to like this, but to be honest, I couldn't remain interested all the way through. Too much niceness and not enough guts.

Bruce Russell

The Field

Yesterday & Today

Kompakt CD/2×LP/Download

Axel Willner's linear and rather perfunctory reworking of shoegaze into a contemporary Techno framework on 2007's *From Here We Go Sublime* album was both critical and commercial success, reworking the complex dynamics of Minimal Techno into a more widely accessible form. This expansion of that album's sound to include more obvious live instrumentation appears at first to be a cynically populist fusion of clunking 1990s stadium Techno maximalism with the grandiose non-specific pathos of a Sigur Rós or even a Coldplay. A triphop-style cover of The Korgis' "Everybody's Got To Learn Sometimes", meanwhile, simply seems pat and beneath Kompakt's remit. However, the superficial bombast of *Yesterday & Today* conceals something altogether stranger and more substantial.

Willner plays clever games with the musical signifiers of flight, freedom, scale and euphoria, never delivering the promised release. Despite having a stadium-sized sound palette, this is music of unrelenting pressure and tension, of enclosure. The centrepiece title track, featuring the rhythm section of Battles, is the key here: two minutes in, the harsh, long string stabs draw a link between EYE's gestural synth interjections in recent Boredoms and the glorious refusal of release in DJ Pierre's early 1990s Wild Pitch tracks. Some tracks' chiming top lines suggest an entirely new joining of Techno with a godless hymnal musical line running through The Velvet Underground and Spiritualized, while others turn Kompakt's frequent flirtations with Trance into full, blown-end prolonged molestations of the genre and its pretensions to transcendence. Even the cover version reveals itself to be dirty, tense, deviant, ill – a plea for transformation made forlorn and desperate. If this does reach any Coldplay fans, they may find they don't like what it does to them.

Joe Muggs

Richard Garet & Brendan Murray

Of Distance

Unframed CD

Of Distance contains two pieces from Garet and Murray, both of whom work in the field of post-lowercase electronic composition. The project began with improvised duet recordings and was followed by a long distance exchange over three years (Garet is based in New York, Murray in Boston). The pieces are relatively long, at 20 and 27 minutes, and the music's long gestation period is apparent in the carefully layered music. The pace is slow and the shifts in mood are gradual, as Garet and Murray lead the listener through a series of atmospheres in which throbs, rasps, rattles, whistles and the occasional identifiable field recording all feature.

There's a lot of detail at both the high and low ends of the spectrum, which gives album a full sound. The compositions ebb and flow pleasingly, as collections of sounds come together, disperse and then reform again. Overall the effect is of two well-matched composerly orientations. However, the work is not bursting with surprises – a familiar vocabulary of drones and loops sometimes sends it down predictable paths. My favourite moment of the CD comes about 12 minutes into the second piece. "The Tyranny Of Objects", when everything suddenly falls away for a few seconds to leave a succession of short hisses. My ears wanted more such twists and turns.

Will Montgomery

Groupshow

The Martyrdom Of Groupshow

- scape CD/Download

Andrew Pekler, Hanno Leichtmann and Jan Jelinek, three key members of the Berlin/Pole electronic axis, come together as Groupshow to create 12 tracks edited down from 200 gigabytes' worth of jam sessions. These generally feature an array of effects pedals and electronic sketchwork, in which who does what is hard to determine. Although these collages are involved and hardly easy listening, they're replete with sanguine energy and invariably raise a smile. There's a peculiar German tradition of this sort of music, which includes among its predecessors Der Plan, one of making almost cartoon expressionist electronica that is garishly playful, ingrained with non-verbal wit and cheerful to an almost sinister degree. This spirit is borne out by titles like ""I Love, Love, Love, Love It"", "Sleep, Play, Sleep, Play, The Possibilities Are Endless" and "Anyone Care For A Drink?".

The Martyrdom Of Groupshow sparkles from the outset, with "Dog Shoes To The Stars" assailed by heavyweight fireflies. Then there is "The Future Looks Bright, Super Bright", sponging and spinning off at dizzying tangents. "Incredibly Comfortable Slippers" reminds fleetingly of Taylor Deupree, but whereas Deupree sips at his sonic nectar, Groupshow glug the stuff down with such gusto you can see their Adam's apples working up and down. Occasionally, shadows pass across the beatscape, though titles such as "The Misery Of Thin, Weak Looking Hair" hint that the mood is never likely to get that dystopian. Ultimately, this is one of those albums which affirms that exuberance is not the exclusive prerogative of pop.

David Stubbs

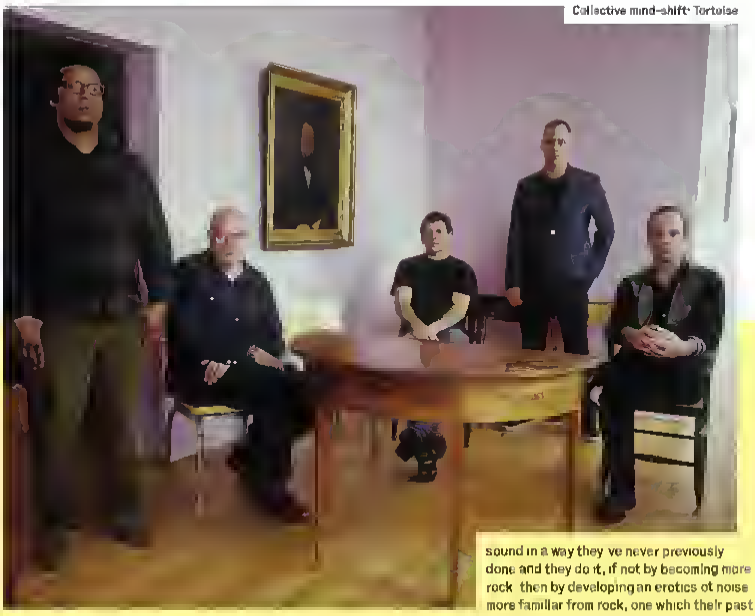
Robert Hampson

Vectors

Touch CD

In his late 1980s days with Loop, Robert Hampson went on his own trajectory from rock to post-rock. Loop themselves were a neo-psychedelic supernova, a tiny and receding presence within the vastness of their own sunblinded sound. By the time of their last album, 1990's *A Gilded Eternity*, they were already mapping out the cherred craterscape where rock had notionally crashed and burned. Eventually with Main, Hampson moved further away from guitars into a more electroacoustic domain – a logical trajectory. However, it's not quite that simple, for he actually started out working in that domain, before experimenting, in Loop, with a rock format.

Hard to tell, then, whether he has been moving backwards or forwards, and so it is with *Vectors*, which comprises three lengthy and picaresque journeys into electroacoustic outer/inner space. Opener "Umbre" is a linear, astral sequence of field events, including creaking floorboards, flurries of space dust, the desultory clank of windchimes. "Ahead – Only The Stars" begins with us dumped mysteriously by the side of a motorway, with cars flashing occasionally by, before once again we are transported beyond the heavens, into regions in which a sense of the Hubble telescope vastness of space is coupled with an intimate awareness of respiratory functions. Finally, "Dans Le Lointain" conveys the serene rush of the imaginary



Collective mind-shift: Tortoise

The disjointed return of post-rock's reluctant standard bearers reveals an unfamiliar jagged edge. By Sam Davies

Tortoise
Beacons Of Ancestorship
Thrill Jockey CD/LP/Download

When Torto se first appeared in the early 1990s they were quickly labelled as post-rock – which seemed something ot e misnomer in their case. The tag which caught on critically after Simon Reynolds used it to describe *Hex* by Bark Psychosis in 1994 was effectively a shorthend tag to distinguish those within the rock lineage looking outwards. With groups like Slint Roden Labradford or Bark Psychosis, the basic building blocks of rock were still there – guiter bass drums vocals verse, chorus – even if they had been stacked into unusually flattened affectless arrangements, which left the average *NME* reader as stramped as those baffled by the bricks of Carl Andre's *Equivalent VIII* in 1976. But post-rock swiftly degenerated into signpost-rock, with groups like Mogwai (and to a lesser extent Godspeed You! Black Emperor) doing little more than flag up their recent listening hebits, borrowing the atmosphere without the ideas and smuggling in a crassly pseudo-spiritual sensibility. What was valuable in the notion of post-rock – the tendency towards guitar unheroics, in which amps emitted textures not solos and groups rewrote the hoary old sonic hierarchy of power-trio dynamics – was quickly lost.

Tortoise were not only the most edept at these oblique sonic strategies they were the least rock-like. There was barely a mineral trace on their 1994 self-titled debut and the follow-up *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* – even if the backgrounds of some members lay in groups such as Bastro or Slint which were firmly within the rock-punk-hardcore continnum. It wesn t just the absence of guitars, it was the entire ethos: no vocals, dub mixology, electronics, polyrhythms that referenced American minimalism and its African inspirations, a harmonic trame that ventured beyond the blues scale – they were so fer out of the rock frame of reference that post-rock was misleading as an identifier.

The initial buzz of these genre crossings soon wore off, however. With the diminishing returns of *TNT* (1998) and *Standards* (2001), Tortoise seemed to be crossbreeding strands of history only to prodnce sterile hybrid offspring, all the while remain ng offstage, God-like genre engineers paring their fingernails behind the mixing desk. *Beacons Of Ancestorship*, then, with all its backwards-looking connotetions, is an unpromising title. The lest thing music needs at the moment is more hand-warming round the dying embers of pest achievements.

But rether than tasteful stylistic collage, this is a fragmented record, a series of half-formed points of departnre from the Tortoise template. The fragments don't fully cohere: end taken with the group's five year album absence – save for their 2006 colleboration with Bonnie 'Prince' Billy on the eccentric covers album *The Brave And The Bold* – they give that title an ironic inversion, suggesting a degree of identity crisis, an impatience with their own history. For most of the album, Tortoise fuck with sound in a way they've never previously done and they do it, if not by becoming more rock, then by developing an erotics ot noise more familiar from rock, one which their past sonic clerity worked counter to.

This is no guitar record, although guitars have been creeping up in the mix since *Standards*. Nor is the dominent instrument on *Beacons* their trademerk vibraphone. It s the overdriven anelogue synth – often three at once, plunging down towards snb-bass depths. There's practically a garage punk aesthetic at work by the end ot opener "High Class Slim Came Floatin' In". Structurelly it works like a typical Tortoise track, evolving organically with a group-minded logic, so that a jerky synth jam becomes stop-start Ambient drift. But the next move into a seething one-note throb of distortion, is distinctly un-Tortoise. This gonzo dynamic peaks on "Yinxianghechengqi" a flat sprint in which John McEntire s drums, normally so immaculately turned out, all but buckle under the weight of the bass guitar sludge on top of them. Post-production isn t used as a chance to fix or correct, but to further denaturellse and werp the material.

Elsewhere the drums have a physicality that references the dancefloor with a directness new for the group. There's a heedlessness, en abandon, on display in "Northern Something" – a three minute excursion into necksnapping dancehell shuffle and dubstep bass wobble – which would have been nnthinkable on Tortoise's earlier, more po faced releases. The combination ot McEntire's beats and zigzagging synths at times recalls the electro-zombie gait heard in hiphop productions like J-Kwon's "Tipsy"...or, on "Monument Six One Thousand" and the miniature "Penumbra", post-J Dilla beatmeking. Bumps the breakbeat project worked on by McEntire with fellow Tortoise percussionists Dan Bitney end John Herndon, seems to have an afterlife here.

Beacons subsides in its finel third with a run of pastiche culs de sac like "The Fall Of Seven Diamonds Plus One" stitching together twanging John Barry guitars, cod-dramatic drums and other tired signifiers ot slick 1960s spy tricks. But before that Tortoise do enough to suggest a collective mind shift. Take "Gigantes", another lateral-thinking groove in which asymmetric *On The Corner* funk bristles with the mutant percussion of Switch's productions for MIA. It picks up where "Dot/Eyes" from 2004's *It's All Around You*, with its savage seesaw samples and sonic black holes, left off. *Beacons* helps retrospectively to make more sense of that album, the surprisingly lnsh, humid textures of which telt like a nonsequitur on its 2004 release. Taken as a pair, they show the group chafing against the negative aesthetic of their earlier output: in which bassines were cleaned up, sounds were subtracted, drums sifted and seperated to leave empty space. Tortoise are now more interested in multiplying, warping, exaggerating. That oppressive air of good sonic hygiene is gone; this is a record revelling in the jouissance of white noise and fuzz: no longer an act of reverent mnsical caretaking. □

ocean and the endless elongated peal of an alarm clock. Is this real space or headspace? One needn't care. *Vectors* reminds of familiar things of Kubrick and Stockhausen, yet at the same time feels fresh, revealing beautiful and unchartered.
David Stubbs

Harappian Night Recordings
The Glorious Gongs Of Hanuwele
Bo Weavil CD

Twangy sub-Saharan idiophones buzzing Egyptian reeds and booming gamelan gongs are amongst a small library of instruments deployed in this one-man-band collage. The screech and warble of simple strings and flutes are multitracked over droning reeds or percussion, on another track we hear a single instrument in a haze of ambient sound. Like entries in a travel scrapbook, tracks fade in and out like glimpses of busy market streets and calmer, sacred spaces. The sonic glare of overloaded recording levels evokes equally the Tannoy blur of the Muslim call to worship in the modern urban setting and the evocative background burble of field recordings.

In the tradition of Can's Ethnological Forgery Series and The Sun City Girls, and at the height of the popularity of the Sublime Frequencies label's publishing of raw music from less industrialised zones, Harappian Night Recordings similarly offer up the exotic and for a similar audience. Made in Sheffield by Syed Kamran Ali, this deliberately unresolvable mix of South East Asian and North African cultural allusions clothes a gleefully punky affirmation of the beauty of sounds distant from overfamiliar idiom and ProTools and Auto-Tune gloss.
Jon Eyweter

Erdem Helvacioğlu
Wounded Breath
Aucourant CD

"Below The Cold Ocean", "Dance Of Fire", "Lead Crystal Marbles", "Blank Mirror" – Turkish composer Erdem Helvacioğlu provides suggestive titles for these electroacoustic pieces. And each is glossed with a descriptive paragraph – an image, a fragment of narrative. The title track is identified as a deathbed scenario, an elderly woman alone in a dim room, fading through a swarm of memories. The overall intent of his music is decidedly emotive and dramatic rather than coolly Ambient.

As a working musician Helvacioğlu keeps his activities varied. He has collaborated with such disparate performers as Mick Karn, Kevin Moore, Ros Bandt and Elliott Sharp, and has responded to commissions from sources including Bang On A Can All-Stars and the 2006 World Soccer Championship. He has created gallery installations, provided music for theatre and dance companies, and made critically acclaimed soundtracks for film. Still *Wounded Breath* draws on a familiar stockpile of electroacoustic sonorities and effects – luminous shimmer, chromium glow, elusive swell and fade, metallic scrunch and cosmic sweep.

Helvacioğlu's compositions are dynamically well-crafted and vividly designed to be evocative – and they're broadly successful in those terms. Whether the evocation matches the critical events or states of mind identified by the texts will, I suspect, largely depend on each listener's readiness to be steered by the composer's words. In terms of the actual sounds, you may well feel you have been here before and that earlier associations linger.
Julian Cowley

The Inner Space
Agilok & Blubbo
Wah Wah CD

The principal reason for remembering Peter Schneider's rndergrondrn film *Agilok & Blubbo* is not the quality of its screenplay. Released in early 1969, it's very much a period piece: the two heroes of the title are revolutionaries holed up in a forest hideaway, plotting a political kidnapping but who get distracted by the charms of a nubile young woman who conveniently wanders by. No, the most interesting element is the musical soundtrack, which was mostly recorded by the trio Inner Space, a group formed for the occasion by young composer Irmin Schmidt, his former student buddy Holger Czukay, itinerant jazz drummer Jaki Liebezeit, and the much younger guitarist Michael Karoli.

Can's *Monster Movie* album, and the tracks subsequently collected as *Delay 68*, have always been taken as Krautrock's Year Zero. But these summer 1968 recordings finally extracted from the ownership of producer Hans Wewerka, and released on a Barcelona label, document some of Can's very first encounters, including the dancing flute of David Johnson, the Amercan Stockhausen assistant who engineered the sessions, but dropped out once it was clear the rest of the group were becoming more and more enamoured of rock sounds such as the Velvet Underground and Frank Zappa.

Some of the first cues – including the title track, issued as a single featuring the vocals of lead actress Rosy-Rosy – err on the flimsy side: it would take Malcolm Mooney's arrival in 1969 to focus the group's psychotic energy. But in better cuts such as in "Flop Pop", the dazzling ten minute wah-fest, "Apokalypse" and the 16 minute abstracted free-for-all "Hexapussy", it's possible to hear the birth of the monotonous groove that group made their own.
Rob Young

Philip Johnston
Page Of Madness
Asynchronous CD/Download

In 1998, saxophonist Philip Johnston was commissioned to compose and perform a soundtrack for Japanese director Teinosuke Kinugasa's 1926 silent film *A Page Of Madness*. Though one of the performances was recorded with an eye to releasing it as a soundtrack later, Johnston couldn't find a label interested in the project. He eventually decided to issue it himself, and the resulting disc captures Johnston and his then ensemble, the New York based Transparent Quartet, at their best.

A Page Of Madness is widely considered a masterpiece of Japanese cinema, yet it's still not readily available. It was, in fact, lost for nearly 50 years after its initial release. It used virtually every avant garde technique known at the time, including surreal dream sequences, high speed montages and various depictions of madness. Johnston's score wisely doesn't try to compete with the often chaotic onscreen action, maintaining a relatively calm, though tightly wound tone for most of the time. The quartet (sax/piano/vibraphone/bass) float from one theme to another, often seemingly suspended in mid-air for long stretches. Though many passages are improvised, the group's playing is restrained, even placid, thanks in part to the absence of a drummer and the dreamy effect of the vibes. Johnston's soprano sax also keeps the mood light, though that normally innocent instrument also has its sinister side, like a clown gone bad, an attribute he can milk when necessary.

If the group's sound has a certain superficial resemblance to the more notable 1950s West Coast jazz groups such as Jimmy Giuffre's early trio, it nevertheless flirts far more with dissonance, jarring syncopation and darker themes than any of those outfits would have done. Despite the general airiness of the music here, and the choice of instrumentation, the playing never feels back on prettiness – not an easy thing, and appropriate given the subject matter of Kinugasa's film.
Dave Mandl

Junior Boys
Begone Dull Care
Domino CD/LP/Download

Begone Dull Care can be imagined as a companion piece to, or a negative emotional image of, another Domino release which came out last year. Jon Savage's compilation of early 1980s electro, *Dreams Come True*. While that album was all enraptured bodily hedonism, *Begone Dull Care* takes many of the same sonic elements and builds the sound of the Sunday after: serotonin sucked away, work tomorrow personally pitched down to minus eight, dreams gone sour. It's technically dance music – rhythms from disco, House, electro, analogue synths in smart, fidgety riffs – but it isn't music to dance to, not least because Jeremy Greenspan's lyrics are obviously designed to be more than just verbal filler in the area marked 'vocal'. There's also a disembodied quality to the production, an absence of the kinetic physicality that defines dance music.

In a way, this is like Burial, post-rave music – the music of aftermath. Which is not to say that it's comedown music, the kind of comfort cushioning packaged like aural paracetamols on various ten-a-penny club compilations. Instead it dwells on the endless difficulties of the interpersonal ("*If you found the words/Would you really say them?/Or saunter through the verse?/With mumbled punctuation?*"). It's not about unthinking happiness as the opposite of dull care, but rather the cold (but real) compensations of setting aside the kind of bodily delirium demanded on *Dreams Come True* for a different kind of pursuit: a half-lit working and reworking of what you have and what you want, turning despondency into enlightenment via disenchantment. Like The Smiths (anachronistically), *Begone Dull Care* finds a pleasure principle in melancholy miserable, but happier to be under no illusions.
Sam Davies

Greg Kowalsky
Tape Chants
Kranky CD

Greg Kowalsky's *Tape Chants* proves the paradox that the best Ambient music is quite wasted as background fare. Played quietly and attended passively, its sombre drawn out tones, furred with analogue hiss, create a mood similar to that of steady rain heard through an open window in the next room. It takes volume and patience to plumb its depths, which are as much the result of Kowalsky's exploration of spatial phenomena as his rejection of contemporary means, but the effort is worth it.

The Oakland, California based composer who once recorded under the name Osso Bucco, made his previous album, *Through The Cordial Window*, with a computer, which he used to atomise sounds sourced from acoustic strings, field recordings and the group isis into a pleasantly shimmering, pixellated haze. Since its completion, he's swapped the ease of digital means for the wilful wobble of mono cassette players which he loads with tapes of acoustic or analogue electronic instruments such as a gong, piano, or sineweve oscillator.

In performance, Kowalsky situated the tape players around the room, adjusting the volume of each unit until he got a mix that suited the particular concert space. While he didn't try to recreate such psychoacoustic effects on *Tape Chants*, by piling layer upon layer of fuzzy, downpitched instrumentation, he has nonetheless created illusions of perspective and distance. On one track, whirring machine sounds and barely-there melodies flicker behind a dense fog of bass amp rumble and oscillator hum; on another, a succession of projector-like clatters push a funereal piano march further and further into the background. Throughout, Kowalsky exploits the murk to impart the sense that there's more to his music than you can hear.
Bill Meyer

Christof Kurzmann & Burkherd Stangl
Neuschnee
Erstwhile CD

"*What have they done to my song, ma?*" praises electronics manipulator and clarinettist Christof Kurzmann on "Song Songs", the 18 minute track closing his and guitarist Burkhard Stangl's set of remoulded live and studio improvisations, recorded in Anstria, Chile, the Netherlands and Peru. Stuck it inside quotation marks to annoyingly ironic effect so it turns out all wrong, ma, that's what. Stacking Melanie's line with various lync snippets containing the word 'song' – Dylan's "Mr Tembourine Man", Pri.'s "This Is Not A Love Song", Nick Ceve s "Weeping Song", etc, culminating with a full rendition of Neil Diamond's "Song Sung Blue" – and lamely passing off the results as a 'metasong' suite might have passed muster when the Austrian duo first surprised

their core electroacoustic improv audience by raising their collective voice as Schnee at an Amplify festival five years ago. But what back then sounded refreshing, revolutionary even, smuggling pop, rock and soul song into the airless chambers of EAI, has on this evidence already grown stale.

On *Neuschnee*, Kurzmann's singing simply doesn't cut it, sadly. Elsewhere, on earlier song albums like The Year Of's *Slow Days* and The Magic ID's *till my breath gives out*, his Lou Reed-y voice was both communicative and appealingly vulnerable, especially when contrasted with that of The Magic ID's Margareth Kammerer. Through most of *Neuschnee*, however, he sounds annoyingly smug, his wavering, talk-sung delivery divesting lyric contents of their emotional charge and rendering their bittersweet sentiments blank and affectless. I sincerely doubt this was Kurzmann's intention, as his love of song is genuine, but it sounds like he's descending on the material from above, rather than animating it from within.

Set aside memories of Martyn Bates and Mick Harris's *Murder Ballads* collection, and his voice just about carries on the folk song nestled amid the crackling twigs, bone rattling and dark forest drone of the 15 minute "In The Global Snow Of Things". The guitar-led, mostly instrumental "Gredler" is better still, tapping the heavy middle European melancholy of early 1970s Austrian German cinema. But "Homeless Dogs", recorded in Chile, with Edán and Nicholas Carrasco on saxophone and electronics, is more Kurzmann karaoke: this time honking a Chet Baker-like attempt at the standard "Taking A Chance On Love".

His extinguished torch approach is reprised on the aforementioned "Song Sung Blue" closing "Song Songs". Here, the album's purported aims at a reconciliation of popular song and EAI are finally laid low when a profoundly moving sample of a historic recording of Austrian yodeller Maly Nagl is brought up in the mix. If it's *Neuschnee*'s one cutting edge moment, it's because she sings it like she means it, man.
Biba Kopf

L'Ocelle Mare
L'Ocelle Mare
Minority LP
Thomas Bonvalet is half of Cheval De Frise, a frantic French math rock duo consisting of acoustic guitar and drums. For his solo work Bonvalet goes by the name of L'Ocelle Mare. This brilliant LP finds his classical guitar in a series of deserted French locations. Bats, insects and birds contribute to the atmosphere, or the stony reverberations of a ruined stable; harshen the guitar sound. Bonvalet plays with dynamism, one might say virtuosity, but a few of these 16 brief, untitled tracks simply luxuriate in the tiny sounds of his favourite outdoor spaces. The result is a remarkable balancing act between contemplative listening and explosive musical energy, all of it beautifully recorded.

If these are improvisations, they are performed with a strong compositional sense. This, plus Bonvalet's instrumental acrobatics, recall a very early Fred Frith. Bonvalet stamps his feet in a moment of almost flamenco, then honks into a harmonica, or holds a rattle while plunging into double-handed ecstasies of scraping, like a one man band in a hurry. He switches from one rhythm to another, or from harmonious to atonal, with great sense of logical development and timbral variety. Sometimes he has the earthy flamboyance of Marc Ribot, though his roots sound classical and Mediterranean. So the final track leaps from a web of string scrabblings into a kind of tarantella dance, then abruptly stops, and we listen to the spider's supper singing in the background.
Clive Bell

Radu Malfatti & Taku Unami
Goat Vs Donkey
Taumeturg CD-R/Download
So this is pretty quiet, right? But played about 50 per cent louder than you would normally listen to a recording, there's a lot to hear on this live set from Malfatti and Unami at the Luis Seoane Foundation in Corunna, Spain. The building has a nice reverb and some sound timbers (I use the word advisedly). Trying to pick Unami's percussive contributions from the door which features frequently throughout is genuinely difficult.

When your performance is unrelievedly quiet, the inevitable result is that the audience listens harder and hears – as John Cage proved in his fabled sojourn in the anechoic chamber – something. There's always something to hear when we listen. One of the most surprising moments in this album occurred last Wednesday when one of my children took a shower upstairs and I had to turn the stereo down to be sure of what I was in fact listening to.

The mention of Cage brings up a fundamental difficulty with compositions or performances in which the sounds made are (in a sense) not the point. When the resulting work is analogous to something like Tony Conrad's 1961 word score *Piece* ("to perform this piece, do not perform this piece") – I'm left with the impression that I'm watching an eight year old's magic show. Very good, but haven't I seen these tricks somewhere before?

I'll admit I'm fundamentally sceptical about this whole 'Reductionist' shtick. It's not that there's no occasion to play quietly, but quiet is a relative term and only makes sense to me when countered by sounds that are less quiet. And that's why this album, in the final analysis, does work. Because Malfatti's subsonic drones (perhaps on trombone), Unami's distant locust swarms of electronics and percussive interjections, intended and unintended, plus the sound of the Fonndation building, are enough to get me listening, thinking and responding. But only just.
Bruce Russell

Jon Mueller
Physical Changes
Table Of The Elements/Radium CD+LP+DVD
Milwaukee based percussionist Jon Mueller is a busy man who skirts the edges of post rock, electronica and drone in Mouths and Collection Of Colonies Of Bees, collaborates with Lionel Marchetti and Zev, and improvises solo and with the likes of Jeph Jerman, Jason Kahn and Tim Catlin. Mueller's 2008 album *Metols* opened a new chapter in his solo output. Like a Metal album with all instrumentation save percussion stripped away, its sensory assault of precise, pummelling rhythms contrasted sterkly with his previous solo releases.

Physical Changes is an extrapolation of *Metols*, which pivots on "Nothing Changes", a 36 minute composition created by Mueller and then handed over to a quartet of collaborators to rearrange. In its original form it introduces discrete sounds and loops them, adding percussion and gradually building all the elements into a sustained and intense barrage of high speed, geometric rhythms. The piece's volume and intensity make it an overwhelming experience, but it's packed with detail – changes and movements in the rhythms are clearly audible, and Jim Schoenecker's analogue synth and Fred Lonberg-Holm's cello add textural grit. Maximalist for its sheer power, minimalist for its organisation of sound and use of repetition, it's a curiously hybrid form. The percussive rhythms are maintained in a kind of high-energy holding pattern, a stasis produced by extreme physical effort, always on the point of collapsing or blurring into pure texture.

Its four rearrangements are studies in contrast. James Plotkin's two versions make explicit the link to the genre of Metal, with at times bombastic results. On "Change Is The Only Evidence Of Life", he uses Mueller's percussion as source material, depressing it into a flat mass of rhythms, then drawing out a beat in isolation and distorting it, every so often panning frequencies across the stereo spectrum. Plotkin adds guitar and electronics to "Things Will Not Stay The Way They Are", surfing the momentum of the rhythms with skyscraping guitar arcs, or swamping them with sludgy distortion.

Dan Burke of Illusion Of Safety renders "Nothing Changes" as "The Only Constant Thing Is Change", a 26 minute deconstruction which plays with hierarchies of positioning, overlaying the percussion with gloopy electronics, muting it and eventually dispensing with it altogether. On the DVD an even more radical reconfiguration soundtracks David Dinnall's landscape footage. Contributions from Marcus Schmickler's electronics and Schoenecker are added, the latter arranging the results into a noise-drone crescendo, a spectacular if unrecognisable mutation of "Nothing Changes". It's this flexibility of approach, combined with a willingness to connect disparate forms and the project's sheer scope and ambition, which make *Physical Changes* Mueller's most significant solo release to date.
Nick Cain

The Nether Down
Well Song
Porter CD
Prolific New Zealander Anthony Milton has a dozen or more musical incarnations releasing CDs, CD-Rs and LPs on his

Ian Harris

The Wisdom Of Winter

A beautiful and enchanting CD

www.orrery-music.co.uk

own Pseudoarcana record label as AM Birdcatcher, Glory Fckn Sun, Paper Wings, Sunken and The Stumps, among others. The Nether Dawn project melds drones with free improv acoustic guitar to create lengthy essays in stark light and shade.

Well Song was recorded in a bunker on New Zealand's North Island. Milton was attracted not only by the spectacular views, but by the echoing quality of sounds in the bunker's cave-like confines. It is a virtual extra instrument, and the cavernous echo that enrobes these fractured drones is a unifying thread in the recordings.

At its most compelling this album recalls the Dream Syndicate recordings of Tony Conrad and John Cale. A track like "Still Watch The Sky" opens with the slowness of fog lifting from the shore, layers of violin and washes of electronics building into a pulsing, hypnotic machine. There's a similar ebbing urgency to the intense "Step Through The Night", which, despite the echo of the bunker, has a claustrophobic centre where Milton half-sings, half-whispers the album's only lyrics. Elsewhere he plays an expressive, brittle style of acoustic guitar, thrusting and vivid on "Rise", sparse and delicate on the somnambulant "Fools Sweet Ramble". Whether playing with scrubbed fierceness or the lightest touch, his guitar playing makes these recordings stand out among the many free folk dirges around these days.

Nick Southgate

Not Given Lightly

Various

Morr Music 2×CD/3×LP

In the mid-1980s when people began to discover the music of New Zealand's Flying Nun label, there were gasps of delight heard loud throughout the underground. Unbeknownst to much of the outside world, a scene had developed in NZ that was a bizarre and wildly exciting alloy of several elements. There was jagged punky noise from The Gordons, there was cracked Residents-style culture-vomit from The Tall Dwarfs, Ayers-like doom-Prog from This Kind Of Punishment, and various fractured forms of Velvets damaged/Big Star inflected pop.

Not Given Lightly (the name taken from Chris Knox's classic tune) is a tribute to the poppiest impulses of the first and second generation Flying Nun groups, performed in the most pleasant ways imaginable, by Lali Puna, Isan and other modern popsters. This is not in and of itself a problem. Combos like The Bats, The Chills, Jean Paul Sartre Experience, and even The Tall Dwarfs could create readymade pop classics, suitable for regurgitation by any bubblegum organisation on Earth. But it feels as though these gnys and gals all want to sand the edges off the more interesting punk based impulses that drove the originals.

It's a bit sad that almost all of the noisier Flying Nun groups are ignored (excepting The Tall Dwarfs and The Jeffries brothers) no matter how poppy some of their moves could be. Examining the label's legacy without tackling The Gordons, Terminals or This Kind Of Punishment misses some great opportunities. *Not Given Clean* also tacitly ignores the import of adjunct labels like Dead C's Xpressway. The Axemen's A Sleek Bott and various other noise generators. And it would be much cooler to hear the Kleenex-like thump of Look Blue Go Purple's "Cactus Cat" than another Robert Scott, Martin Phillips or Chris Knox tune, no matter how splendid.

There was a lot more to Flying Nun then poptones. How nice if this compilation would have added a disc of less user friendly covers rather than just tack on some demo tracks by groups from its own roster.

Byron Coley

The One Ensemble Orchestra

Other Thunders

No Fi CD

An inspired blend of the ominous and the scuzzy, Daniel Padden's One Ensemble goes from strength to strength. Here, in response to an invitation from Bristol's now defunct Venn Festival, Padden has expanded his usual quartet to seven, adding bass clarinet and other low woodwinds to his regular cello/viola set-up. His own guitar and vocals occupy a modest seat somewhere near the back, and the overall sound is dominated by sombre strings and winds, with a fine harmonium solo moment on the rather medieval "The Vapour".

There's certainly a smattering of folksy elements here – on "The Sun" a sea shanty is heard below decks before arriving centre stage for a choral harmony session, but then it's all swept away by some snappy, Stravinsky-style writing. Typically Padden has three or four strong ideas in each of these eight pieces, and for all its looseness, his group are a delightfully non-uptight contemporary music ensemble, albeit one with a Lewis Carroll tinge. Bent on a unified ensemble sound, improvisatory, playful yet meditative at the same time – this is post-Cardew chamber music, as performed by the Walrus and the Carpenter. At the risk of appearing to take the whole thing over seriously, it's post-Howard Skempton the long, slow lines, the insistence on melody, even the fondness for choral singing. At the same time there's an earthy, surreal theatricality shared with other fringe groups such as the more rock-driven Super Best Friends Club.

Clive Bell

Panama! 2: Latin Sounds, Cumbia Tropical & Calypso Funk On The Isthmus 1967–77

Various

Soundway CD

Serving as the connector between the Atlantic and Pacific and the bridge between North and South America, Panama should be one of the world's great cultural crossroads. Yet, perhaps as a result of a century of US dominion or the fact that, instead of a crossroads Panama is more of a waystation, it has produced few renowned musicians aside from salsero/actor/Minister of Tourism Ruben Blades and reggaeton progenitor El General. The second volume of Soundway's very fine archaeological expeditions to the Canal zone doesn't do much to change this perception, but it does unearth some absolute scorchers that deserve better than to languish in obscurity.

Less funky than volume one, *Panama! 2* focuses on the accordion-driven cumbias of the country's rural interior. In the hands of Papi Brandao and his various groups or Idamerica Ruiz, the Panamanian cumbia is more rhythmically hot than its Colombian cousin but just as pleasingly ramshackle. As enjoyable as the cumbias are, though, the real creole flavour is elsewhere. Revolucionarios swipe a Herbie Hancock guitar figure from Tabou Combo (just as Tabou Combo lifted a Latin guitar line for their monster hit "Inflacion"). The Duncan Brothers borrow George Benson's wah-wah pedal on "Dreams", a soft jazz instrumental you can believe it, and Sir Jablonsky and Lord Cobra respectively add some skank and Archie Bell & The Drells to traditional calypso. The best track here, though, is Los Superiores' "Descarga Superior" is a seriously funky jam redolent of late 60s Afro-jazz. Malo, Eddie Palmieri's Harlem River Drive, and there's even a little snippet reminiscent of Lou Reed losing it on guitar. Muy sabroso.

Peter Shapiro

Andres Perkins

Faulty (Broken Orbit)

Important CD

Although her first instrument is the accordion, Andrea Parkins has been most aptly described as a 'sound-ist', creating a fractured array of aural outcomes through unorthodox methods. *Faulty (Broken Orbit)* is achieved by means of objects, feedback and drones, and is a re-imagination of a ten channel site specific installation exhibited at the Diapason Gallery for Sound in New York City in 2007. Miked surfaces and everyday objects are activated as sound against a shifting backdrop of electric accordion-driven feedback and samples of clarinets (played by Laurent Bruttin) and contrabass (Dragos Tara).

It's a truism with music of this kind – improvised, conceptual – that it's necessary to see as well as hear it performed in order to understand its workings. Somehow, this does not seem appropriate in the case of *Faulty*, which yields too much to be tethered to a single image – that is, the installation itself. The field of events is very busy indeed, in contrast to a good deal of sound art, where space and silence are rather overused. On "i", low end grumbling and a gnarly undertow of accordion make for a dramatic, unresolved exchange. On "ii", with all its attendant narrative and unexpected turns, one thinks at times of Ligeti or AMM, with sustained feedback taking on an almost choral role. On "v", the sheer traffic of chance and premeditation glues up into gridlock. Finally, on "vi", the gravity defying energy recalls one of Sun Ra's intergelactic electric keyboard excursions.

David Stubbs

Phantom Limb & Earth's Hypnagogia

In Celebration Of Knowing All The Blues Of The Evening

Unframed Recordings CD

New York City's Phantom Limb & Bison consist of multi-instrumentalists Shawn Hansen, Chris Heenan, Jaime Fennelly and Chris Forsyth, the latter two also members of the stellar Peeesseye. Where that group deconstruct rock, Noise and improv in surprising ways, Phantom Limb & Bison take a simpler tack, concentrating on minimalist drones often made in collaboration with guest artists. The Bison portion of their name disappears during these partnerships, such as on their excellent 2006 disc *Hot Ginger*, wherein the ever inventive Japanese guitarist Tetuzi Akiyama took Heenan's place.

In Celebration Of Knowing All The Blues Of The Evening isn't a collaboration; it was performed by the duo of Fennelly and Hansen (as the sleevenotes put it: "When one is absent, all are present"). So it's not apparent who or what Earth's Hypnagogia are, but what remains clear is the simplicity of the music, this time composed by Hansen and played on Farfisa organs and sinewave oscillators. Of the six long pieces presented here, the first half (titled "Civil Twilight Parts 1–3") consists of slow-moving drifts that barely change, the large columns of sound akin to the massive drones of Phill Niblock.

In the subsequent three parts titled "Darkness (Nautical Twilight)", the pair's forward progress grows clearer. During the second part, timid Farfisa chords become dark, dramatic waves, as if Fennelly and Hansen had levitated from a quiet room into a cavernous chamber hell. Part three turns that trick even more ferociously, unfurling sheets of howling noise that sound refreshingly angry. The arc of this performance, which took place in a photography studio, was meant to mimic the transition of the ontside light from day to night. That's a simple enough goal, but one that the duo achieve with the subtlety of dusk, shifting and adjusting their sounds in beguiling fashion.

Marc Masters

The Present

The Way We Are

Leaf CD/Download

Instead of opting for transcendence with a blunt instrument (of Black Angels, Wooden Shjips et al), this trio led by Panda Bear producer Rusty Santos forge fearlessly into deep, abstract territory in an idiosyncratic, loosely constrained pursuit of the cosmic. The press release name-checks the likes of Can, La Monte Young and Arthur Russell, which might be setting the bar recklessly high, but in fact The Present acquit themselves admirably on this, their second album. Their music sounds texturally dense, but not impenetrably so. It's a soundtrack that appears to absorb its environment rather than attempt to impose some sort of order onto it. And so it moves from staccato, atonal Noise patterns through rhythmless dnbscapes and across sedate plains of pulsating sound.

The first half of the album is divided between five tracks which each establish their own abstract criteria. It is both intriguing and vaguely frustrating, as each mood is established then successively abandoned. However, this episodic approach is then expanded for the closing title track

Reading the blueprint for electronic music's minimal revolution, **Joe Muggs** senses pathways to divine worlds

Unit shifter: Robert Hood

Robert Hood
Minimal Nation Special Edition
M_Plant 2×CD/2×LP/Download

In the mid-1990s electronic music was being rewritten. Jungle was exploding and Jeff Mills's granite kicks and Basic Channel's smoked-out pulse dominated in clubs. But in among these sounds one record released on Mills's Axis label stood out as so singular in its intent and execution that DJ sets were sometimes built entirely from its tracks alone. Later, its reflective surfaces and ingeniously balanced rhythmic skeleton were reconstructed in the lean and deadly UK syncopations of early Metalheadz releases, of Groove Chronicles' two-step Garage, of Pinch and Peverelist's haunted dubstep. But in 1994, with Robert Hood's *Minimal Nation* – now officially available, in an expanded edition, for the first time in a decade – the distillation of Detroit Techno down to the simplest musical motifs felt like a window opening up in the chaos and flux of electronic music, a portal into a world of pure, elegant shape and movement.

The notion of minimalism has been rendered all but meaningless in electronic club music by the term's recent application to any vaguely spaced out House or Techno. But when Hood and Mills moved away from Underground Resistance in the early 90s, their adoption of minimalism was a deliberate aesthetic strategy. Hood and Mills imposed a fierce discipline on their recordings, recasting electronic music as a set of stark, interlocking rectilinear patterns with elegant symmetry, an audio analogue of the tessellated designs of Islamic art.

Of course, others before had attempted to rejuvenate their music by stripping away excess. But this was not the complete rewriting of melodic and rhythmic rules of Glass, Reich and Riley, nor did it have the wilful primitivism of The Stooges or The Velvet Underground's back-to-basics approach to rock'n'roll. Oddly, although a world away in sound, this minimal approach was perhaps closer to that of The Ramones, breaking the music that inspired it (Motown, Spector, garage rock, The Ramones' case funk, synth pop and Industrial in Hood's and Mills's) into the simplest possible units of information, then reassembling them like master craftsmen into swift, ultra-efficient, no-nonsense delivery units.

Both Hood and Mills have suggested that this was an attempt to create a musical language that would translate outside the clubs of Detroit, and could reach towards a kind of universality. Without doubt this was partly commercially driven, but the aesthetic reasons for the move into minimalism are diverse. Mills was, and is, the dedicated futurist, citing modernist architecture, John Cage and Japan as influences on his engagement with the electronic globalisation of culture. Hood, however, always emphasised the importance of individual inspiration, and more recently he has couched this in the terms of his Christian faith, referring to *Minimal Nation* as "God's idea working through me... God showing me a glimpse of the future, along with images and memories from the past" and "not just a collection of rhythm tracks but a supernatural work of art realised".

As with all mystical art, it's down to individual listeners whether they feel a connection to this sense of revealed truth. But *Minimal Nation* can certainly be heard as devotional music. You can detect a striving for the eternal in its mechanisms: the kind of yearning for the infinite implied in the aforementioned Islamic geometries, or in Zen artists' endless dedication to perfection of form. The music also attempts to create a clear-headed, sacred trance state as an alternative to the dark and profane psychedelia of Acid: the swift tempos and crisp separation of sounds, and the dry and springily melodic Roland synth riffs in "Museum", "Ride" and the self-descriptive "SH-101", the latter previously unreleased, create an entirely different atmosphere from the squelching delirium of "Acid Trax", or the disquieting synaptic crackling in Richie Hawtin's contemporaneous experiments in minimalism. And in the organ chops and bubbling guitar-like synth of "Unix", or the rising riff of "Self Powered", restored to the album after previously appearing only on rare test pressings, there are hints of the exultation of gospel, though never at the expense of Techno's raw, mechanical power.

However much this record may be presented as a supernatural work of art, though, it was never meant to be treated too reverently. The tracks were, after all, constructed for DJ manipulation. The credit on many of Hood's M_Plant releases – "all music data by Robert Hood" – is revealing. These tracks, riffs and patterns are modular data to be processed and reprocessed by DJs and dancers. The addition and removal of individual riffs are abrupt, without ornamentation to signal each change. While "Rhythm Of Vision" and "Unix" may feel complete in themselves, other tracks begin and end suddenly, perhaps even arbitrarily, as if they were made to be part of a longer flow. Then again, as an album considered in its entirety, *Minimal Nation* has never been set in stone. This latest version, featuring a bonus DJ mix by Hood, offers but the latest variation of tracks and running orders to a number of previous editions released by Axis and M_Plant in the 90s. But the tough remastering gives the set an extra sheen, and the two unreleased tracks lock into the album's structures perfectly. For all their abstraction, these were resilient tracks, built for active hands and minds to use and reuse, and their utility – the joy of playing them and playing *with* them – remains strong today. □

where the group broaden their textural reach over a single 30 minute piece involving tape manipulation drones freestyle percussion and fragmentary voice samples It is here that the music really breaks free of its episodic, collaged contrivances allowing its textures to bleed into one another and merge, building up to an almost ritualistic sense of abstract intensity
Tom Ridge

Respect Sextet
Sirius Respect. The Respect Sextet Play The Music Of Sun Ra & Stockhausen
Mode Avant CD
Although they grew up in very different worlds thousands of miles apart Herman Blount (Sun Ra) and Karlheinz Stockhausen had plenty in common Claiming to be visitors from outer space – Ra from Saturn, Stockhausen from Sirius – each found a way out of a musical environment governed by strict rules Each adapted the codes and conventions of respectively swing and serialism, to their own ends, with a close knit community of colourful characters – Ra's in the back streets of Philadelphia, Stockhausen's in the rolling hills north east of Cologne.

This joint tribute from a group of Eastman School of Music alumni then is more convincing than the cringeworthy pun of its title might lead you to expect. The quirky angularity of the 12 melodies one for each sign of the zodiac, that Stockhausen wrote for 1975's *Musik Im Bauch* and published separately as *Tierkreis* (three of them are included here) is also found in Ra's ferociously difficult "Shadow World", which receives a bravura reading from these six musicians, who swing appropriately hard and blow wild The album alternates Ra and Stockhausen offerings before combining the former's "Saturn" and the latter's *Capricorn* in a sprawling final jam but Ra wins on the deal "El Is The Sound Of Joy" is treated to a majestic ten minutes, with fine playing from trombonist James Hirschfeld and pianist Rod Wierenga while "Set Sail For The Sun", from Stockhausen's *Aus Den Sieben Tagen* (1968) gets just over five and a half – not quite enough for "the whole sound to turn to gold to pure, gently shimmering fire", as the composer intended
Dan Warburton

The Skull Defekts
The Temple
Important CD/LP
The title of The Skull Defekts' 2008 release, *The Drone Drug*, gives a pretty good indication of what they've been aiming for since they formed in 2005 Core members, drummer Henrik Rylander and guitarist Joachim Nordwall have fused their backgrounds in the Swedish garage rock and electronics scenes, striving to create a stoner-drone Noise-rock hybrid that seeks to reconcile the 1980s Industrial obsession with psychedelicised occult matters with a post-Iggy urge to get bonehead-wasted This latest – recorded by a quartet also featuring percussionist Jean-Louis Huhta and guitarist Daniel Fagerstrom – has a much more straightforward rock sound than previous releases Stooges-like repetitive guitar riffs build on pounding tribal drums, with sneered punk vocals and the occasional blast of power electronics But somehow it fails to convince

It might be the lip-curling faux-American accent that the vocals insist on using – pronouncing 'God' as 'Gahd' with maddening regularity It might be that ritualistic drum beat – all floor-tom and no snare – which aims for Sufi transcendence but ends up sounding more like Adam Ant's take on Native America, and which reaches its absolute apogee on the track with *the* most ill-advised and patronising name seen for a while "Unholy Drums For Psychedelic Africa" It might even be all the casually dispensed 'occult' imagery of skulls knives and number sixes – all tossed out with a reckless abandon quite at odds with the defining 'hidden' nature of genuine occult practice

Whatever the reasons, the result has an unappetising ersatz tang. You've seen those scenes in 1980s martial arts movies where the laughably unconvincing gang of baddies – all incongruous mohicans and dodgy eye make-up – are hanging out in a darkened nightclub planning their next transgression? This is what they're listening to.
Daniel Spicer

snd
Atavism
Raster-Noton CD
Atavism arrives in the wake of *4_5_6* – Mark Fell and Mat Steel's self released triple 12" which marked their return to the snd name after a six year hiatus. The sebbatical was punctuated only by 2005's pseudonymous release under the name Blir *Roster Edits* (their first for Raster-Noton) More than a decade into their career and a year following their comeback *Atavism* and *4_5_6* suggest that the Sheffield pair are at their peak.

As the title *Atavism* implies, snd's original self-imposed parameters hold true Crisp mechanised percussive elements and an emphasis on repetition remain the spec Touchstones of Techno and House regularly provide an accessible thread around which other, more alien guises of rhythm skitter, skate and modulate. It's (still) an unusually distinct vision, but focus and consistency are exactly what showcase the growth in their mastery over the form Such tireless niche exploration is undoubtedly served well by their long working relationship but it has not dulled their intent or output

Subtle shifts make all the difference A toughening and cleansing of the sound changes the tone completely and adds weight to what may have been previously overlooked as electronica or clicks 'n' cuts The compositions of overlapping layers of rhythms, elegant in their apparent simplicity, carry farther into simultaneous but different directions; they're humanised by an innate, if unusual, sense of groove (often more akin to a biological imperative than the demands of the dancefloor) and abstracted by fierce regulation and clipped abruptness

While snd can often hide behind a façade of sterility – sleeves so minimal they border on anti-design oblique titles (or no titles at all) music deeply digital in its precision – here they display a refined human touch It betrays the living heart animating the titanium torso of *Atavism*
Lisa Blanning

SoiSong
xAj3z
SoiSong CD
On the one hand riddles obfuscation and mystery On the other, inky romance and decadent glossy swoons It's no surprise that this latest project from Peter 'Sleazy' Christopherson should combine two features that have been key aspects of his music for more than 30 years – the surprise is the lengths to which he and his latest collaborator, Ivan Pavlov aka COH, have taken them

SoiSong's debut album is a truly baffling artefact – an octagonal CD which comes wrapped in an awkward, asymmetrically folded art print It's difficult to open it without damaging it. It's impossible to play it in a computer disc drive, and the sleeve info is, to say the least, laconic. The album title reads like a computer generated password – it turns out that's exactly what it is. Enter it in the box at soisong.com and you end up amongst a succession of cryptic images which are adorned by the single phrase "area in expansion: please visit again".

It's all smoke and mirrors. Although you might expect Pavlov's involvement to deliver bracing doses of astringent rigour *xAj3z* actually contains some of the most seductive and approachable music that Christopherson has ever made. The front end of the album is quirky – the opening "Amkhapaa" binds spartan music box melodies to a menacing sub-bass undertow while "T-Hu Ri Toh" is a mock-sinister playground incantation. From then on, though, it's all languid low-slung beats and tumbling, tactile guitars – a succession of dazed skanks, echoplexed ballads and strung out mood pieces which make for quintessential late night listening. In fact, it's tempting to reach out for an old Coil title and describe *xAj3z* as *More Musick To Play In The Dark*
Chris Sharp

Sonic Youth
The Eternal
Matador CD/2×LP
With this new release from Sonic Youth – their first for an independent after leaving Geffen – and surprisingly sprightly albums imminent from Dinosaur Jr and Meat Puppets one could be forgiven for thinking early 2009 has slipped into an indie rock timewarp What's unusual isn't so much that these groups are endnning or returning – the new classicism fostered by ATP and Don't Look Back ensuring that right now any one of your favourite groups could come back from the land of never-again without shock or surprise – but that they are capable of matching, in some cases improving on, their original form Sonic Youth are a somewhat more complex proposition than most given their unshakable line-up (although Mark Ibold, ex-Free Kitten/Pavement bassist debuts here), their enormous and undeniable influence on the shape of rock and the fact that their records have never really dipped below a certain level of quality

However, the last appreciable reinvigoration of their sound probably took place on 2002's *Murray Street* with the canny recruitment of Jim O'Rourke Here as on 2006's *Rather Ripped* Sonic Youth sound relaxed comfortable and – whisper it – comforting They are ensconced in their own corner of the universe their current inspirations (including painter Yves Klein, poet Gregory Corso Kevin Ayers and Neu!) effortlessly absorbed and translated into a strong, concise set of songs brilliantly played The Goo-era garage moves of "Sacred Trickster", the fretscrape flurries of album highlight "Anti-Orgasm" and the blurred roadside snapshot of "Malibu Gas Station" in particular indicate a group exploring a vernacular they pioneered and perfected decades ago. Still, such is the strength of their legend, it feels decidedly weird to be praising Sonic Youth for their professionalism rather than their innovation Perhaps the rumoured Black Metal influence wouldn't have been such a revolting development after all.
Joseph Stannard

Satoshi Sonoda
Everything Lies Beyond The Burning Summer Grass: Early Works Of Satoshi Sonoda Memories Of Yosushi Ozowa 1977–78
PSF CD
Many will already have saluted Fushitsushe bassist Yasushi Ozawa's passing in early 2008 with a sharp blast of that group's *Pathétique* album. With Ozawa gone, the death of Fushitsushe as a group may now be complete, and their music stands as its own elegy His friend and early collaborator Satoshi Sonoda's release of his own early recordings featuring Ozawa presents a different sort of memorial a tribute to the youthful influence of a friend rather than a reflection of the friend's music

For much of the time Ozawa seems to be obliging a friend with accompaniment more than anything The third track, with its mellifluously meandering rock guitar over lilting accompaniment, sees Ozawa, as Sonoda genially admits in his sleevenotes plucking away uncomfortably The second track is more intriguing largely due to Ozawa's insistent bass motif, though one is all the more poignantly aware that Sonoda's guitar fails to ignite into a Keiji Haino-style inferno Indeed, compared with other Japanese psychedelic of the time, Sonoda can seem backward-looking – the first, untitled track, announces itself with flanged guitar, shimmering cymbals and tom rolls evoking dusk, and a briskly riffed dawn to follow

Conversely, he is unnecessarily apologetic about the all-out improv of track seven, perhaps the strongest piece here, as it shifts from jangling peroxysms of percussion (think the sound world of marimba player Keiko Abe) to a jolly oompah piano with joyously lugubrious whooping ("The Laughing Policemen" performed by The Clangers)

The other most successful pieces are the three tracks under the crunching faux punk ANaRkISS moniker featuring a Kan Mikami cover. In the end, it is the sheer diversity and exuberance of the package that wins out. As Sonoda's touching sleevenotes are crucial in articulating this is an unassuming but engaging tribute to a moment of nakedly gauche exploration conducted in after-hours university classrooms. Inspired by a future luminary

Stephen Thomson

Spectre
Infernal Dynasty
WordSound CD

The legacy of the so-called illbient scene of the mid-1990s is a mixed one. On the one hand, labels such as Brooklyn's WordSound and artists such as Sensational and Scotty Hard showed the fertile musical underside of urban New York, a teeming microculture of funky bugs and parasites lurking under the fat carcass of hiphop. On the other, the deep faith in sampling and the remix as infallible creative catalysts can seem slightly dated these days, as do some of the chunkier, skunkier beats, which are a little wasteful compared to the economic tick-tock of contemporary hiphop beats.

The beats are still on the chunky side on the latest album by Skiz Fernando, aka Spectre. The Ill Saint and the boss of the WordSound label. But given the rigid, reactionary horizons of hiphop these days, an album which starts out mixing the "*I tried to tell the children of Jah*" vocal from "Teppa Zuke In Dub" into Jimi Hendrix's "Stone Free" is bound to sound stunningly fresh in comparison – it's frankly rare these days for a hiphop album to trust its audience to connect such disperate dots. *Infernal Dynasty* has other new elements in the mix, too. "Catch A Fire" with Japanese rapper Gebo features some of the most awesome polysyllebic flows I've ever heerd, Sensational raps more dextrously than he has for years, and there are Latino and German voices elsewhere.

Infernal Dynasty is not a huge departure from the WordSound sound of the mid-90s, but it's surprisingly forceful nonetheless. The decade and more since the heyday of illbient has also provided alternative perspectives from which to view the beat digging WordSound excels in – the stinking audio-reclametion on display here suggests parallels with contemporary tape fiends such as The Skaters or the No Fun Productions label as much as the Wu-Tang.

Derek Walmsley

Spunk
Kontorell
Rune Grammofon CD

All-femele Norwegian group Spunk have a 12 year track record as an improvising quartet. Probably the member with the highest profile is composer/Noise freak Maja Ratkje, but fellow members Lene Grønager, Hild Sofie Tafjord and Kristin Andersen are all heavyweights too, being trained composers, Stete Academy graduates, solo recording artists and so on. So you might expect beady-eyed alertness and fierce discipline, and so it is – no drooling freak folkery from Spunk, in spite of their mushroom-styled album title.

Their speciality is a kind of car-chase excitement combining acoustic instruments most noticeably Grønager's foot-to-the-floor cello, with confidently acrobatic electronics. "Bipolarity" is a well sustained example, a build-up where the cello sounds like running shoes hitting the pevement then into a hectic rece. "Eetan" has a funfair quality, tearing along in a ghost train, or meybe thet squelching sound indicetes we are tunnelling through en intestine. Tafjord's held notes on French horn open up orchestral vistas. The tension between sustained tones and racing impulse is very fine, creating an epic feel also found on the opener "Tremble".

By contrast "Quadralogue" is all acoustic and more conventional – a skittish, pointillist flurry that sounds familier from Improv's back pages. Where Spunk are less comfortable is with anything restful or static. "Music has to be strong," says Ratkje. While not exactly a macho release, *Kontorell* is a fierce one, and its virtues lie in its careening energy and tight grip on the steering wheel.

Clive Bell

Igor Stravinsky
Le Sacre Du Printemps – Stefan Goldmann Edit
Macro CD/Download

Stefan Goldmann takes a longer view of history than many of his Minimal Techno peers. His mix album from earlier this year was titled *The Empty Foxhole*, in homage to Ornette Coleman, and this new project is a wholehearted immers on in the work of Igor Stravinsky. It's reminiscent of the way Ekkehard Ehlers binds historical figures into a cultural cont nuum that simultaneously looks further back, and further forwards, than immedetely fashionable concerns.

Here, he's executed a plunderphonic collage whose nearest precedent would be John Oswald's *Grayfolded* CD of 1994, in which Oswald stitched together a CD's worth of the improvised bits from successive renderings of The Grateful Dead's "Dark Star". Goldmann's gone a step further, drawing attention to the way the classical recording industry thrives on the competition between multiple versions of the same piece. Out of around 15 separate recordings of *The Rite Of Spring*, he's braided together short extracts to re-constitute the entire score as written, but with 146 different edits.

The work is so subtle. It takes a number of hearings to discern exactly what's going on. After a while, your ear begins to acclimatise to the microscopic alterations in background noise, studio acoustics and up-or down-ratchet ings of intensity. This works on a number of levels, both as a 'perfect' version composed of the very best moments from the aveilable range; to a critique of the way modern classical recordings are usually, in themselves, assembled from hundreds of minute digital takes, in quest of perfection, to a conceptual highlighting of the phonographic impurities that give classical recordings their unique imprint even as they strive to make the process invisible. Goldmann's explorations of these nuances are all the more welcome emanating from someone who works in a field in which history is more commonly deemed to have finished.

Rob Young

Sun Circle
Sun Circle
Lichen/Autumn LP

Zach Wellace
Glass Armonica
Root Strata CD

The drone is a form without surprise or narrative. Instead, it's about casting and maintaining a spell, be it through immersive volume, fine gradients of texture, time-stopping tonal stasis, or high density aggregates of tone. As bessist in Memorize The Sky, one half of Sun Circle with Greg Davis, and on his own, Zach Wallace is fluent in all of these approaches. More importantly, he seems capeble of pushing the form's stubborn boundaries. These two releases show how he does it, but also point out the drone's limitations.

The three I-ve performances on *Glass Armonica* are ringing, gossamer and almost electronic in their sheen. Yet the tones are purely acoustic, produced on an instrument built by Wallace from thriftstore wine glasses and secondhand parts. The pump action of the instrument creates an unusually active mass of undulating tones. Fatigue, however, does start to set in as the high-frequency gliss can grow too uniform.

On the A side of *Sun Circle*, a reissue of their limited edition debut CD-R from 2005, Wallace and Davis lay down their drone credentials, tapping into the neverending growl that runs through La Monte Young to Pendit Pran Nath and on into infinity. A Farfisa organ, throat singing and massive volume serve to make the performance a classic headlong rush. It's raw, not very subtle and endlessly engaging. But the B side of *Sun Circle* does what *Glass Armonica* and many other drone albums often fail to do – provide contrast to the sheer surface of extended tonal bliss. For 20 minutes, the simple, periodic sounding of bells and a gong ripple the overarching calm and silence. Feldman-like, in their own decaying progress towards the horizon. No surprises here, but that's not really the point.

Matthew Wuethrich

Sun Ra
Featuring Pharoah Sanders & Black Harold
ESP-Disk CD

It's not much of an exaggeration to call this disc a historical document of profound significance. It captures Sun Ra's Arkestra in concert at New York's Judson Hall on New Year's Eve 1964, as part of Four Days In December, a series of concerts organised by the Jazz Composers Guild – including Re, Cecil Taylor, Bill Dixon, Archie Shepp and others – still riding on the explosion of energy detonated two months earlier by the October Revolution In Jazz and the unveiling of the New Thing.

But, as the title suggests, the greatest point of interest here is the ownership of the

PILLOWDIVER SLEEPING PILLS 12K/0144
MOLLY BERG + STEPHEN VITIELLO THE GORILLA VARIATIONS 12K/0139
TAYLOR DEUPREE WEATHER & WORN 12K/0133
12k
12K.COM

lungs powering the tenor sax. At this time, Ra's tenor mainstay John Gilmore was on a rare sabbatical from The Arkestra, swapping his gold tunic for a snappy suit to play hard bop with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. Ra had already befriended Ferrell Sanders from Little Rock, Arkansas and given him the name Pharoah when he was living on the streets of Greenwich Village, making him an obvious deputy for this gig. Sanders had already released his debut *Pharoah's First*, that year, but was still months way from his involvement with John Coltrane. What's most astonishing about his appearence here, aged 24, is how his signature primal shriek is already fully formed. He's not a major presence, but when he does break through the ensemble blowouts, it's one of the most recognisable voices in 20th century music.

Musically, the set consists mostly of high energy, big band guided improvisations of the kind Ra would record a few months later for *The Magic City*, interspersed with some pounded piano solos, an Alan Silva arco bass fiddle excursion and a turn from the obscure flautist 'Black' Harold Murray, humming it up with Roland Kirk-influenced vocalisations. Ra completists take note: this reissue supplements the 25 minutes of mono from the original 1976 El Saturn release with 45 minutes of superior quality, previously unheard stereo recordings, including a spaciously cosmic rendition of singalong favourite, "We Travel The Spaceways".
Daniel Spicer

Ghédalia Tazartès
Repas Froid
Tanzprocesz CD

There's no information whatsoever either on this CD to inform us as to exactly when this particular platter of cold cuts from Ghédalia Tazartès's archives was recorded – late 1970s/early 1980s, says Jo Tanz, label manager and Tazartès's playing partner in Reines D'Angleterre, but even he's not sure. Yet it's clearly the work of the same man who served up *Diasporas*, *Une Eclipse Totale Du Soleil* and *Tazartes Transports*, all of which have been given handsome reissue treatment by Alga Marghen in recent years. The difference being that these 20 brief tracks are what the French would call amuse-gueules, bite-size starters before the more substantial first three albums.

The taste is unmistakably Tazartes: a mixture of idiot savant five-finger exercises, wheezy bagpipes and cheesy cheapo synths, liberally seasoned with blasts of primitive drum machine, loops from accordions and radio broadcasts that either go on far too long or end when you're least expecting it, snippets of chatter from the composer's infant offspring, all topped off with his distinctive vocals, either throaty drones or quasi-oriental folk melisma with incomprehensible (to him, too) lyrics. The only thing that these disparate elements have in common, like the hundreds of antique curios and trinkets that clutter up the composer's Paris apartment (see Sébastien Agnetti's wonderful photos in *The Wire* 295), is that they all belong to Ghédalia Tazartès.
Dan Warburton

Teenage: The Creation Of Youth 1911–1946
Various
Tinkont CD

Teenage is an enthralling sonic history lesson. Jon Savage compiled the album to illustrate his book of a similar name – the difference is in the timespan in the subtitle: the book starts from 1875. Savage pointedly rejects the standard dating of the origin of teenage in the post-war years and instead excavates a prehistory of youth culture in ragtime, big band jazz and film music. It's a history of fads and crazes in which rhythmic contagions were central – one inclusion is a song that was ultimately cut from *The Wizard Of Oz* in which the jitterbug has become a dangerous bird. Savage's sleevenotes are, of course, indispensable, and they remove some of the Easy Listening sepia from Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington and even Glenn Miller, restoring a vivid context in which this music played out tensions between libido cultural identity and commodification.

Amid all the dionysiac dance, there are moments of quiet contemplation. Judy Garland's "In-Between" is practically the theme song of the disc, capturing the painfully unresolved nature of adolescent experience at a time before youth was capable of affirming itself as a positive state in its own right, and this is a record in which you can hear all kinds of in-between spaces. Particularly fascinating is the transit between the USA and Europe – the 'addictive drug' of ragtime hooking Gottlieb's Orchestra in Britain, the Zazous, jazz fiends in occupied France, taking inspiration from Cab Calloway, the Hot Club Frenkfurt playing forbidden swing in Nazi Germany. As you'd expect, the space between delinquency and social responsibility keeps coming up: Bob Crosby & His Orchestra celebrate the Zoot suit, but Mildred Bailey only warmed to her lover once he traded his in for a uniform (Bailey demonstrating her own patriotism by interrupting her song with an aside urging listeners to buy war bonds). Then there are the templates for post-war balladry: Frank Sinatra's "Close To You" showcases his famously intimate mic technique, but it's The Mills Brothers' six million selling "Paper Doll" that is the most haunting song here: its spectral, spacy production, sweet, seductive close harmonies and combination of misogyny and melancholy giving a near Gothic edge to its articulation of wartime male sexual anxiety.
Mark Fisher

Tenniscoats
Tamparacha
Room40 CD

When I lived in Tokyo I used to see saxophonists who presumably lived in tiny apartments practising next to the railway line. I imagined a link with Buddhist shakuhachi players, some of whom enjoyed the stern discipline of blowing alongside a roaring waterfall. The new Tenniscoats album continues the tradition after a fashion: the duo have recorded in the great Tokyo outdoors.

Saya (vocals, keyboard) and Ueno Takeshi (guitar, clarinet) have supported Deerhoof live and released a small stack of albums, singles and collaborations with likeminded souls such as Sweden's Tape. Their style is a nail haziness, plenty of simplicity and a hint of melody. *Temparacha* arose from discussions about field recording with Australian label Room40. En route to the Amazon, label man Lawrence English stopped off in Tokyo to record the duo in their habitat: an urban park and river bank.

Nice idea? Possibly, but these seven tracks (totalling 25 minutes) are thin insubstantial fare. Birds twitter behind accordion chords or flowing water surrounds an amplified thumb piano. But the deafening lorry traffic of "Nimichime" is just irritating, and would it kill Ueno to tune his guitar? There's a naive, plonking quality about Tenniscoats this time out that is depressing rather than cute – the banal choice of keyboard sound on "Timeless", the unsubtle plucking of the kalimba – and at four minutes some of these sketchy tracks are way too long. The two items that succeed are those where Saya decides to sing. "Do" might be inspired by rainforest Pygmy vocals, and the closing "Hajimari" is a dreamy vocal/organ number that transcends doodling to stand on its own feet.
Clive Bell

Trembling Bells
Carketh
Honest Jons CD/LP/Download

Greg Kelley & Alex Neilson
Passport To Satan
Golden Lab LP

British free music polymath Alex Neilson has charted an irresistible ascent through parallel dimensions and that shows no sign of slowing just yet. Directing Hand's *What Put The Blood* proved to be one of 2008's highlights, while collaborations with Baby Dee and Will Oldham have seen his name travel further than one might expect for a musician with roots in UK Noise and Improv. Oldham collaborations aside, Trembling Bells is Neilson's most accessible project, and *Carbeth* radiates an easy warmth that sets it apart from the more obviously leftfield work of his other ensembles.

It's a raggedy collection of British folk rock anthems, the apparent approval of Fairport Convention/Incredible String Band producer Joe Boyd giving some clue as to the material's orientation. While a handful of tracks feature the idiosyncretic voice of Neilson himself, the record really belongs to Lavinia Blackwall – also Neilson's partner in Directing Hand – a versatile vocalist who employs a clear, strong tone throughout.

Drawing on an altogether different tradition, *Possport To Satan* is a free blowout featuring Neilson on drums and percussion alongside – or perhaps that should be *against*, given the hectious, argumantative mood of the session – trumpeter Greg Kelley of Bostonian improv group Nmperign. The first side is spacious and noticeably restreined, Kelley limiting himself to controlled bursts of energy while Neilson punctuates. Side two, however, builds inexorably towards critical mass, the trumpeter dominating proceedings with a demonic display of lung power. *Passport* may offer a stark contrast to Trembling Bells homespun charm, but it is delivered with commensurate conviction.
Joseph Stannard

Tussle
Cream Cuts
Smalltown Supersound CD/Download

San Francisco's Tussle drag the denim clad wallflower of Krautrock into the centre of the dancefloor to create a sort of handmade psychedelic Techno. With producer Thom Monahan and contributions from Hot Chip's Alexis Taylor, *Cream Cuts* is the funkiest slab of strangely loose-limbed motorik you're likely to hear this year, or indeed any year.

A track like "Night Of The Hunter" may have dreamy lacunas of piano and kaleidoscopes of backwards sounds that would do any Abbey Road production circa 1967 credit, but its heart is a beat, bassline and fat, in yer face synth. Likewise the structurally self-explanatory "ABACBA" dives and dubs its lithe way around its own paisley-patterned world. To punctuate proceedings and let you get your breath back there are a brief diversions into a toy box of colourful trickery, as on the opening warm-up gambit of "Saturnism" or the African thumb piano mini-suite "Personal Effects". Album closer "Meh-The" has a prevailing synth drone of true motorik and speeds the whole collection into the sunset.

Too much Krautrock inspired post-rock is staid, inward looking and joyless. Worse still, moments of playfulness turn out to be calculated in-jokes. Tussle, on the contrary, take the muscle and momentum of motorik and liberate it with a joie de vivre that makes *Cream Cuts* endlessly listenable.
Nick Southgate

Peter Walker
Long Lost Tapes 1970
Tompkins Square CD/Download

American guitarist Peter Walker came to prominance in the mid-1960s, recorded two albums for Vanguard and then pretty much disappeared without trace. His approach recalled compatriot Robbie Basho, not least in the disparity between his dazzling Eastern-inflected guitar playing and his quirky, not so dazzling vocals.

Walker was finally coaxed out of retirement in 2006 at the age of 69 and is playing live again. The two albums he made last year, *Nylon And Steel* and *Woodstock Autumn*, are truly exceptional, showcasing a dense, complex, knotty style developed from 40 years of woodshedding in isolation, learning flamenco and the sarod.

This collection – in his own words his "last major effort before years of obscurity" – is a completely different proposition. Essentially it comprises six group improvisations recorded at The Band drummer Levon Helm's house in Woodstock. Here Walker plays acoustic and electric guitar along with musicians on tabla, drums, bass, flute and clarinet. Typically on "Camal Rida" he gnaws at the music's fluid, organic

grooves playing single chords insistently in a staccato manner, with occasional flourishes before shifting his attention to tease out musical material from another small area of the fretboard. Occasionally Walker's angular rhythm playing cedes into explorations of raga-like modes, which hit full stride on "Mellowtime" and "City Pulse", courtesy of Badal Roy's tablas and Maruga Booker's kit drums respectively.

Unfortunately Walker's guitar is frustratingly under-recorded. Although not setting himself up hara as the hotshot soloist, the music is built up around his playing, and so at times it lacks focus.

Mike Barnes

John Wiese
Circle Snare
No Fun CD

Sissy Spacek
Glass
Misanthropic Agenda CD

John Wiese apparently had a eureka moment on his 2008 tour of Scandinavia: he suddenly found himself coaxing his arsenal of tapes, mics, electronics and MSP out of old habits and into new heights of articulacy. The results of his breakthrough are recorded on *Circle Snare*.

On each of the three tracks, he uses tiny sonic gestures, the pops of fumbled microphones, pixels of feedback, percussive fragments, to render an expansive canvas wriggling with textural detail. He than slashes into his canvas with scalpels of noise, jets of steam, bomb blasts and collapsing masonry. As these pieces develop the spaces between sounds get smaller, approaching, but always stopping just short of wall noise. Wiese has never been one to fall back on simple immersion tactics, but *Circle Snare* is particularly remarkable for its dynamic switch-ups, veering from full-on assault to fiddlesome glitch and back again in the blink of an eye.

Recorded under the name Sissy Spacek (an umbrella name for Wiese's various collaborative projects), as a duo with Corydon Ronnau, *Glass* is similarly restless, though the palette is more restricted. It's an exercise in defamiliarisation. On the first track, the sound of broken glass is sampled then bent out of shape – pitchshifted, processed and scattered across the stereo field, severing sound from referent. The second track is more brutish, recorded in mono and riven with feedback. The duo seem able to trap the frequencies contained in a single smash of the glass and smear them into blocks of noise, each new smash adding frequencies, cancelling others out. It's an idea of some vintage – the sounds of destruction used constructively – but Wiese and Ronnau execute it with brio.

Wiese is without doubt one of the finest Noise artists working today. He cuts through the bullshit that surrounds the genre – the 'transgressive' branding, the macho posturing – and concentrates on evolving an articulate and nuanced sonic vocabulary. In his hands Noise is not a political statement, or a decadent anti-music, but a potent compositional tool.

Nick Richardson

Paul Wirkus & Mapstation
Forest Full Of Drums
Staubgold/Gram CD+DVD

The great forest has a powerful, atavistic resonance in German culture, and since the Second World War there has been much effort to wrest it back from Herman Goering, the Nazis' preposterous huntsman. In 1977, Peter Brötzmann and Han Bennink were let loose in the Black Forest to duet with themselves and with birdsong, running water and a few distant-sounding cows.

Percussionist Paul Wirkus revisits the concept, but instead of simply playing in the open air, he plays *with* the forest, using branches and logs as acoustic materials. The results are therefore very different to Brötzmann's and Bennink's *Schorzwaldfahrt*, which remains an instrumental record. Here, Wirkus and recordist and mixer Stefan Schneider aka Mapstation create a work in which the line between human performance and environmental noise is steadily elided.

Perhaps the only criticism of the record is that individual tracks are too short, too discontinuous and often too abruptly terminated. So specific and intensely registered are the sounds here that it would have been false to blend them into a single continuous montage, but as it stands one is left with a series of sonic samples, each of which might have been greatly extended. Rain falls, voices are heard, planes drift overhead and there's a background rumble and occasional squawk from the autobahn, whose die-straight passage through the forest was a major trope of Nazi modernism.

The video component is interesting enough as mise-en-scene, but the aural experience is powerful enough, or would be if Wirkus and Schneider were to accept more confidently the immersive logic of their experiment and allow the interaction of natural space and human endeavour a more realistically organic span.

Brian Morton

The World Is Shaking: Cubanisma From The Congo, 1954–55
Various
Honest Jons CD

Long ago, Sheffield steel worker John Low experienced an epiphany courtesy of an obscure record recorded in the Congo. It was an acoustic guitar piece played by Mwenda Jean Bosco, possibly "Masanga". Responding to this weightless, skipping melody, he gave notice and headed for Africa to seek out this unique sound. In 1982 he published *Shaba Diary*, an account of his quest to rediscover the katanga guitar styles of the 1950s and 60s.

Bosco mapped Congolese thumb piano technique onto six-string guitar playing and the melodies of Cuban groups playing hotel lounges in post-war Belgian Congo. Insinuated their way into his fingerpicking. Could it be that Bosco's style proved the generative kernel for Central Africa's subsequent, decades-long obsession with all things Latin?

This new compilation culled from the EMI archives must be the stuff of John Low's happiest reveries. Collected here are popular tracks cut by several of Mwenda Jean Bosco's contemporaries. Bosco's influence was immediate, as Fabian Labasi's "Bengela Ngai Bosele" indicates. There's much delight to be had in hearing that Cuben chestnut "El Manisero" (aka "The Peanut Vendor") reborn as "Moni Moni Non Oey", in a sly, deceptively laidback rendition by AH Dapala.

The instrumentation spans both sides of Bosco's invention: thumb pianos and banjos recall an earlier era, while other tracks evidence a subsequent musical earthquake, sporting guitars, violins and harmonies spawned in missionary churches. The songs are mostly sexy and invigorating, though occasionally tinged with regret. This was, after all, the music of rural emigrés seeking factory work in the new urban centres. As with the black populations transplanted to northern American cities, their music was a link to home, the soundtrack of afterhours fun and a seedbed for experimentation.

Richard Henderson

Seymour Wright & Eddie Prévost
Gomut
Matchless CD

For the past nine years saxophonist Seymour Wright has been a regular participant in weekly improvisation workshops convened in London by percussionist Eddie Prévost. In the manner of most Matchless releases, *Gamut* arrives with statements emphasising shared commitment to improvising as a means of exploratory self-development. In practice, these two musicians must have established a considerable degree of familiarity with one another's procedures, habits and inclinations. The motivating desire remains nonetheless to make music that involves active 'becoming' rather than static and defensive 'being'...music in which the musician's stable ego is destabilised through dialogue with another player and with sound materials.

"This is all very well, but what does it sound like?" Prevost properly asks, presenting the 'inspirational residue' of this session from April 2008. Wright uses alto, studiously avoiding conventional soundings, probing the fringes of its instrumental identity, edging out beyond rasps, squawks and gurgles. Prévost uses roto-toms, drum heads without shells, that can be variably pitched by modifying their tension. It's a music of angularities and undulations, rhythmically emphatic yet irregular, sonically well-defined yet oblique. It takes shape within a relationship in which the problem of how to act or react moment by moment is addressed with intensity and seriousness.

Out of the contrasts, correspondences and coincidences, music emerges. At times the source of the sounds is by no means clear-cut to the listening ear. Listeners familiar with these musicians will know broadly what to expect. In practice you get to hear something else, something still fresh.

Julian Cowley

The Boomerang

New reissues rated on the rebound

Students of the future: 4Hero

4Hero
The Early Plates
Reinforced Download
Rufige Cru
The Early Plates
Reinforced Download
Tek9
The Early Plates
Reinforced Download

Crudely but not reductively put: the vast mutational shift in UK dance music in the early 1990s was kicked off by a simple experiment in sonic-chemical engineering: the introduction of the timestretched breakbeat into rave. What ensued – not one genre, but a sequence of genres, a whole new phase space for multiple sonic evolutions – was, as Simon Reynolds has argued, the UK equivalent of something like reggae. It is also a distinctively UK version of science fiction, this *sonic* fiction pirated and vampirised the Vaders, Predators and Aliens from big budget US sci-fi end horror and constructed an Afro-futurist environment for them to operate in, a UK sound equivalent to *Blade Runner*'s polyglot Los Angeles. These download-only reissues provide an essential primer of this terrain. It's wonderful that these tracks, many of them previously available only on ultra-rare 12"s, can now be heard again (although it's a pity that they appear to have been shoddily mastered from vinyl – at about 3'30" in Tek9's "Rude Bwoy Run Things" you can actually hear the track skip).

What we're listening back to here are the consequences of the breakbeat breakthrough as they were developed in a Dollis Hill, North London sound lab overseen by Dennis 'Dego' McFarlane. Mark 'Marc Mac' Clair, Gus Lawrence and Ian Bardouille, who founded the influential Reinforced label and recorded under the name 4Hero. Tek9 was McFarlane's solo project, while Rufige Cru was the work of sonic conceptualist Clifford Price, aka Goldie, originally the label's graphics designer, and sound technician Rob Playford.

The break here is partly from music – and musicality – itself. You had to learn how to hear this (as) music: there was a *wrongness* to all these ludic cartoon collages, the lurching jump-cuts between moods and textures. It doesn't seem properly digested – which is why Rufige Cru, with its suggestion both of crudeness and incompleteness and of an alimentary process, is such an apt name. It was prevented from being anything-goes collage as it was a functional music: the testing ground for these experiments was always the collective space of the dancefloor. But there was a dynamic feedback process at work, in which the music was constantly probing the limits of the body and of danceability.

You can hear the contours of the new sonic space emerging on 4Hero's "Rising Son", present here in an instrumental version, with its hiphop beats, sample from *Shaft In Africa* and House textures. But the feral psychedelia of the new sound is best showcased on the trio of tracks "Students Of The Future" 1992, a "Cookin' Up Yer Brain" and 1993's "Journey From The Light". The titles signal the trajectories and the orientations: towards a future that is dark, where the brain itself will be subject to mutation. The cranial overheating in "Cookin' Up Yer Brain" is not just a reference to drugs, but to the electro-narcotic potencies of the sound itself, with its pulverising beat, and panic-into-exhilaration synth manipulated so that it resembles a car alarm. "Students Of The Future" swathes samples from a documentary about Nostradamus in timestretched wraiths, while the rapturously imploding breakbeats and reve-dive euphoria of "Journey From The Light" make the equation of darkness with jouissance that practically defines Jungle.

The Tek9 tracks keep flipping between terror and thrill like the stomach of someone riding a rollercoaster. This is a space of drops and rushes, of sudden vertigo and anti-gravity. It's the sound of future-shock as bliss: everything in Tek9's world is accelerating into delirium, incomprehensibility and chaos, but he – and we – can't help enjoying it. The title of "You Got To Slow Down" is a warning that the track ignores, constructing a time that is both hyper-hectic and oddly languorous.

On a personal note, part of the reason I'm delighted these reissues is that, incredibly and inexplicably, I managed to lose two of my Rufige Cru 12"s, the debut "Killa Muffin"/"Krisp Biscuit" record and the later "Ghosts Of My Life". The enormous difference between these two records, released only a year apart from 1992–93, shows how rapidly the genre was evolving. Listened to at the time, Rufige Cru's tracks sounded like a darkening of rave. Listening back now, it is evident how much the early Rufige Cru tunes still share rave's kaleidoscopic colour scheme. The vocal sample on "Killa Muffin" – *"Everything has a bright new sparkle/All the colours are so bright"* – tells us as much. The delay-spirelled electro riff-end Vader vox of "Darkrider", one of Rufige Cru's most celebrated tracks, are still very audibly the darkside of rave. By the time of "Ghosts Of My Life" and "High Rollers Ghosting Out", though, all the jitters and jumps have gone: the colours and textures are starker, sleeker, the mania has drained away. But what remains is by no means depressive. In fact, the mood is not legible in terms of a conventional emotional palette – it's as if depersonalised effects have crawled out of the psyches, memories swarming like autonomous audio lifeforms.

Mark Fisher

Morton Feldman
For Bunita Marcus
Hat[now]ART CD

Welcome back to the catalogue one of the most intellectually discerning and meticulously beautiful Morton Feldman recordings that ever was – and in a freshly mastered edition that makes it sound like you're perched on the piano stool next to Swiss pianist Hildegard Kleeb.

For Bunita Marcus, composed in 1985 and dedicated to his then pupil, was Feldman's last extended piano work, and is the archetypal Feldman piano experience (*Palais De Mari*, written for Marcus, followed a year later, but is a relatively brief 20 minutes). A single, leisurely recurring staccato punctuation mark interrupts an otherwise flowing continuum of canonic and mirroring structures, climaxing in quicksilver double time dance-like episodes. The 90 minute process winds down as Feldman pushes beyond even the sparse extremes of his introductory material.

Since she cut this version in 1990, other recordings have appeared. This year alone: Sabine Liebner (Dehms Classics) and Steffen Schleiermacher (MDG Scene) have offered new perspectives, but an implausibly muted touch and Hildegard Kleeb's contained but alive rhythmic bounce always brings me back to her exacting blueprint.

Morton Feldman redefined what music could be: this performance reaches into his complex arithmetic and labyrinthine structures to find absolute poetry.

Philip Clark

Flipper
Album – Generic Flipper
Domino CD
Gone Fishin'
Domino CD
Public Flipper Limited: Live 1980–1985
Domino CD

"To be bad in ways that no band had ever been bad before" was the mission statement of San Francisco punk mutants Flipper, illustrating both their preemptive self-deprecation and their dedication to upholding the cause of human frailty. Eschewing the phallic attack of his peers, guitarist Ted Falconi slung flaccid, formless guitar noise over rumbling, mid-tempo rhythms, while Will Shatter essayed a desperate vulnerability with his blank howl. Debut album *Generic Flipper* (1982) remains a painful, cathartic experience almost three decades later, "Life Is Cheap", "(I Saw You) Shine" and "Sex Bomb Baby" served up as baleful, bass-heavy anti-anthems for losers at life yet invested with black humour and even the odd glimmer of optimism.

Predating the proto-Doom sludge of Black Flag's *My War* by several years, Flipper were one of the first groups to introduce the Sabbathen concept of heaviness to US hardcore, swiping it from the longhairs and providing the impetus for such future un-Metal practitioners as Melvins, The Butthole Surfers and Harvey Milk. The follow-up, 1984's *Gone Fishin'*, skirts the threshold of bearable misery with greater clarity but even less regard for convention, a diverse, grimly psychedelic work with all the bitter resonance of a

fake suicide note, Falconi's guitar often reduced to a muffled drone and positioned behind a weave of vocals, bass and drums. The sprawling 1986 live compilation *Public Flipper Limited* witnesses the group's already dissolute oeuvre cracked open even wider and subject to all manner of sonic leakage: bass farts, amp crackle and feedback whines emphasising the group's perception of life as a process of continual humiliation redeemed by brief moments of merciful release.
Joseph Stannard

Loop
A Gilded Eternity
Reactor 2×CD/Download
The World In Your Eyes
Reactor 3×CD/Download
Loop took the stripped down rock of The Stooges and The Velvet Underground and served it up drenched in more feedback and effects than their primogenitors ever dreamt of. By the time of their third and final album, 1990's *A Gilded Eternity*, their confidence and ambition were both growing. The album explored more fractured rhythms and varied textures, with the tremolo-fuelled "Be Here Now", for instance, or the stop-start riff of "The Nail Will Burn".

The evolution of style coincided with the addition of second guitarist Scott Dowson and the absorption of other influences into the sound. The influence of Krautrock had been made explicit in their faithful cover of "Mother Sky" on the B side of 1988's "Black Sun". And their tribute album contributions of Neil Young's "Cinnamon Girl" and Nick Drake's "Pink Moon", plus a split single with Godflesh, all suggested Loop were on a quest to find other ways of creating intense recordings beyond the flat-out fuzz and wah-wah assault of their early singles "18 Dreams" and "Burning World". Arguably this quest continued into Robert Hampson's solo project Main. All of the above and more are collected in the comprehensive, career spanning, triple CD set of singles, B sides and rarities, *The World In Your Eyes*.

The post-hardcore scene of the late 80s contained many guitar luminaries, from Dinosaur Jr and The Pixies to My Bloody Valentine and The House Of Love. All of them pushed the sound of rock guitar to new places. However, Loop alone in this period stayed true to the focused primal power of the lift. As such, they are the missing link between The Stooges, Black Sabbath, et al and today's OM, Pharaoh Overlord and Sunn O))). At the time, Loop's path seemed lonely. These re-issues serve to show how prescient their music actually was.
Rick Southgate

Lydia Lunch
Queen Of Siam
Cherry Red CD
If you didn't know that *Queen Of Siam* was Lydia Lunch's first solo album, you'd have trouble placing it in her vast discography. Released in 1980 after the demise of her No Wave trio Teenage Jesus And The Jerks, the album sounds little like that group's harsh, primitive noise rock or anything else she has done. Filled with pretty well-produced songs, some arranged by Hollywood composer Billy Ver Planck, who wrote the theme to *The Flintstones*, *Queen Of Siam* must have sounded like a novelty album or even a children's record at the time.

But it was far from a joke. Lunch somehow injected these slick melodies with the same desperate angst that fuelled her Teenage Jesus howl. The quietly creepy "Mechanical Flattery" tells tales of bones splintering and faces slipping off of skulls, while her scraping guitar creates spine-shivers on the dirge-like "Tied And Twist". Some jazzier tunes evoke Tom Waits's drunken piano and John Zorn's Carl Stalling obsessions; even a cover of the 1960s pop hit "Spooky" conveys an eerie mood. As a statement of purpose, *Queen Of Siam* confirmed Lunch's dedication to surprising everyone, even herself. But the album is more than a symbolic gesture: its odd mix of noir atmosphere, cabaret swing and macabre nursery rhyme still sounds compelling today.
Marc Masters

Jim O'Rourke
I'm Happy, And I'm Singing, And A 1, 2, 3, 4
Editions Mego 2×CD
With his disparate, eclectic discography and without named collaborators to offer up any clues, it's hard to anticipate what you're going to get with any one Jim O'Rourke album. Recorded in various locations, including New York and Tokyo, between 1997 and 1999, this collection finds O'Rourke in the midst of a full flowering of his uncompromisingly experimental side. Originally released in 2001 and now including previously unreleased material from the same period, this is a bracing journey into a world of stuttering, cut-up composition and sustained, trancelike atmospherics.

"I'm Happy" begins as an unstable palette of atonal sounds and drones that collide and overlap, restlessly kinetic yet with a kind of hypnotic quality. "And I'm Singing" introduces more overtly melodic strains into the mix of purring edits, chiming bells and ringing guitar tones. O'Rourke deconstructs his music and rebuilds it with its components fully visible – in embracing an exaggerated artificiality, he seems to define its new essence.

The slow-mo drone of "And A 1, 2, 3, 4" completes the original album's tracklisting, and this is music with a visceral rather than cerebral impact. The second disc's three tracks sound bold enough to be considered more than outtakes. "Getting The Vapors" in particular expends on O'Rourke's textural, collaged methods and creates something that remains fascinating even as it wallows in a murky near-stasis beneath the radar.
Tom Ridge

Bernard Szajner
Some Deaths Take Forever
LTM CD
Superficial Music
LTM CD
Before recording a clutch of albums under his own name during the early 1980s, French composer and laser engineer Bernard Szajner spent time creating light shows and stage effects for such deviant longhairs as Gong, Magma and Stomu Yamash'ta – all three of whom brought strong narrative and audiovisual elements to the more progressive fringes of rock performance in their time. The light show, after all, marks the point at which a gig becomes an environment rather than mere entertainment. Music suddenly has a visuel dimension independent of it being played live.

No great surprise, then, to find that the compositions of a man who once claimed to have "stopped listening to music" in 1977 pulsate, flicker and glow like a bank of ingenious lighting effects. Starting with the balefully frenetic strobing of "Welcome To Death Row", *Some Deaths Take Forever* is a series of sharp refractions and angled reflections. Szajner's uninflected sequencers are counterpointed throughout by Magma's Klaus Blasquiz and Bernard Paganotti, bringing a Kobaian disco precision to "Ritual" and "Execute". There is, however, a perceptible slowing down of tempos towards the end of this 1980 set, which continues on *Superficial Music*, released the following year. Reworking recordings originally made for an earlier project by slowing them down or running them backwards through harmonizers and other electronic effects, Szajner creates a series of translucent pieces, stripped of the instrumental sparkle to be found in his colleborations with Blasquiz and Paganotti. The two albums feel very different from each other, but are closely related through the composer's preoccupation with the inhumanity of mechanised death in the 20th century. Dedicated to Amnesty International, *Some Deaths Take Forever* is a tortured meditation on the electric chair as killing machine, while *Superficial Music* ends with the three-part "Oswiecim", a grim memorial to Auschwitz. Accompanied by extensive sleevenotes and useful bonus tracks, both suggest that there is still much to learn about the music made in 1980s.
Ken Hollings

Keith Tippett Septet
A Loose Kite In A Gentle Wind Floating With Only My Will For An Anchor
Ogun CD
There's an almost orchestral self-sufficiency to Keith Tippett's solo piano performances. It's a dimension of the way he hears as much as the way he plays and that's reflected in the multiple voices and exhilaratingly broad dynamics of his ensemble work. For this live 1984 recording he was joined in Exeter by six musicians who

Keith Tippett

patently shared his vision: saxophonists Elton Dean and Larry Stabbins, trombonist Nick Evans, Mark Charig on cornet, bassist Paul Rogers and drummer Tony Levin. Tippett steers from the keyboard – rhythmically propulsive, a lyrical melodist, evocatively textural, intricately inventive or simply adding necessary fills. The title track is a 65 minute four-part suite that allows everyone to shine. But the architecture underpinning their creative fluidity bears the unmistakable Tippett stamp. A concluding track pays homage to Charles Mingus. The Ogun label, set up in the early 1970s by Hazel Miller and her late husband Harry, has been a place of exuberant musical invention, unexpected departures and resilient affirmation. Tippett became, in effect, the house pianist. This uplifting and satisfying release shows why.
Julian Cowley

Wildildlife
Peas Feast
Crucial Blast 12"/Download
San Francisco's Wildildlife are one of the more rewarding groups to slobber forth from the current glut of US neo-psychedelia. Their debut album, 2007's *Six*, owed as much to Animal Collective, Butthole Surfers and early Meat Puppets as it did to Boris, exhibiting a playful yet slightly sardonic attitude that also suffuses this vinyl reissue of pre-*Six* tour CD, *Peas Feast*.

The EP's four tracks are indulgent sprawls, lacking the discipline exercised on their official debut. The group nevertheless lay down some convincing post-Melvins riffage alongside detours into skewed pop prettiness that justify the Animal Collective comparison and modulate the overwhelming sense of hallucinogenic derangement.

If there's an element of parody in Wildildlife's style – as their vocal tics and rampant shifts of tone and pace suggest – it scarcely matters, what's here sounds entirely fresh and, on "White Eyelids", unexpectedly moving. An accompanying digital card allows the listener access to *The Drongolet Demos*, comprising a further four bursts of heavy technicolour.
Joseph Stannard

Jack Kilby (Tippett)

Avant Rock

Reviewed by **Joseph Stannard**

Ajilvsga
Medicine Bull
Dreamsheep CD
Oklahoma's Ajilvsga have been in operation since 2005, peddling a Doom Metal-influenced strain of blackened drone. There's a vaguely orchestral element buried amid the crunching sonics that brings to mind the melancholy movements of Amber Asylum and The Angelic Process. Ajilvsga appear less interested in monolithic stasis than in the gradual accumulation of atmosphere. These tracks are constantly shifting, their thick, lurching layers of muggy distortion grinding against each other. The 20 minute plus "Big Black Meteorite Star", employs a buzzing, tinnitus synth whining away unmelodically in the middle distance, emphasising the cosmic enormity of its setting. With the sparsely melodic "Leviathan Vanquished" the duo apply a similar strategy to convey a sense of abjection clearly derived from the Xasthur/Leviathan end of depressive Black Metal. Refusing to settle into a cloddish inertia, *Medicine Bull* is a disorientating listen, with more to offer then yet another variation on the Earth/Sunn O))) blueprint.

BLK JKS
Mystery
Secretly Canadian CD
Infusing oceanic rock with the South African blues tradition known as mbaqanga, Johannesburg quartet BLK JKS ebb and flow like the psych rock outfit Arthur Russell might have masterminded were he so inclined, or King Crimson circa *Three Of A Perfect Pair* after a heavy dub injection. There's a lot going on in each track, the music selling perilously close to collapse on occasion as the elements fail to quite cohere, but the group's energy, ability and imagination are undeniable, and it's definitely refreshing to hear some African rock musicians messing creatively with their musical heritage, as opposed to yet another bunch of privileged Brooklynites.

Dinosaur Jr
Farm
Play It Again Sam CD/Download
For all J Mascis's reputation as a monosyllabic sollpsist, there's very little about Dinosaur Jr's second post-reformation album, following 2007's *Beyond*, that could accurately be described as lethargic or non-communicative. *Farm* is ridiculously exuberant, roaring in on the elemental current of Mascis's still potent anti-virtuosity and sounding like the work of a group actually grateful to be playing together again. The original line-up of Mascis, bassist Lou Barlow and drummer Murph lock in tight throughout, the oceanic swell of the guitars traced by the rhythm section with menful sensitivity and grace. Occasionally, as on the rapturous "I Want You To Know", the trio actually improve on 1988's classic *Bug*. Having buried the hatchet with Mascis, Barlow in particular is writing more convincing songs now than he ever did first time around, as evinced by the excellent "Imagination Blind" that closes the album.

The Dirty Projectors
Bitte Orca
Domino CD/LP/Download
This Brooklyn outfit's previous album, 2007's *Rise Above*, was a curious exercise in recollection and interpretation, being a track by track detournement of Black Flag's 1981 hardcore classic, *Damaged*, which the group professed to have rendered by memory alone. It was a clever conceit which in practice provided little in the way of melodic anchorage for the wayward vocals of Dave Longstreth. This time, Longstreth's vocal excesses are held in check by two major factors – firstly, the songs on *Bitte Orca* are the group's own, secondly, co-vocalists Angel Deradoorian (keyboard/guitar/bass), Amber Coffman (guitar) and Haley Dekle present more than a match for the frontman's flamboyant delivery, not least when deploying some formidable close harmonies. *Bitte Orca* is not only an improvement on the preceding album, but melds contemporary R&B rhythms, West African-influenced guitar and 70s Prog rock into a chewy and unpredictable pop hybrid. *Bitte Orca* may represent the most convincing and cohesive urban/art-rock crossover since Tom Tom Club's 1981 album debut.

L'Acephale
Malefeasance
Aurora Borealis CD
Working from the same verdant Pacific North West region as fellow Black Metal experimentalists Velvet Cacoon, Wolves In The Throne Room and Fauna, Oregon based multi-instrumentalist Set Sothis Nox La (aka Brian Booty) is unusual among his contemporaries, displaying an erudition rarely associated with any subgenre of Metal – Booty's group name is derived from the name of the journal and secret society established by Georges Bataille in 1936, one aim of which was to reclaim the work of Nietzsche from the increasingly powerful forces of fascism – as well as a healthy disregard for the concept of musical purity. It's hard to categorise *Malefeasance* as anything but a work of collage, pieced together using fragments of folk, contemporary composition and Noise, with Black Metal as one element among many – it isn't until the fourth track, "A Burned Village", that anything resembling a riff buzzes into earshot, and that is eventually wrestled into submission by twisted, gutteral vocals and excoriating electronic noise. The results of Booty's stylistic promiscuity are close in spirit and execution to the sustained trauma of Diamanda Galas's *Plague Mass*, though lacking her righteous ire and fierce compassion.

Meat Puppets
Sewn Together
Megaforce CD
Curt and Cris Kirkwood's 2007 comeback album *Rise To Your Knees* was good, but certainly not great, and paled beside Curt's 2005 solo effort, the stately and gorgeous *Snow*. In retrospect, given the various travails experienced by the Kirkwood brothers in the years prior to their reunion, they were perhaps entitled to take a baby step, rather than a giant leap, back into the spotlight. This impression is compounded by the altogether more extrovert *Sewn Together*, which shares an overall shape and spirit with perched, Countrified 1980s peaks *Up On The Sun* and *Huevos*, while the heavier moments recall the quicksilver chug of 1989's underrated farewell to SST, *Monsters*. That said, most of this material is brighter and more straightforwardly melodic than anything the Arizona group have previously released, each song sounding as though it were recorded in a sun-dappled woodland glade rather than the airless confines of the studio. While the simmering mania of the Kirkwoods' earliest recordings is largely absent, it's clear that maturity has not fostered complacency – Curt's obtuse, imagistic lyricism remains intact, and the album features numerous transcendent moments, best exemplified by the extended coda of "Blanket Of Weeds", the relentless kineticism of "Rotten Shame" and the strident, almost operatic "Clone".

Pocahaunted
Passage
Troubleman Unlimited LP
Pocahaunted's *Chains* was one of the surprise highlights of last year, an ambitious album which drew connections between dub, drone rock, Noise and, most unexpectedly, the lush Californian soft rock of Buckingham/Nicks-period Fleetwood Mac. *Chains* hinted at sound combinations that their peers were either too timid or too cool to explore, and seemed to indicate a new era for the duo of Amanda Brown and Bethany Sharaya. However, none of their several subsequent LPs has equalled it for scope and audacity. With *Passage* – a four-track affair recorded with drone polymath Bobb Bruno and guitarist Cameron Stallones – they regain that momentum. It's a smooth, streamlined affair, Brown and Sharaya's wordless vocals sitting comfortably on warm expanses of amorphous sound. While the hell-for-leather genre-meshing that made *Chains* such a triumph is still absent, this material benefits from a new clarity of vision and increased audio fidelity. Lindsey Buckingham would be proud.

Raccoo-oo-oon
Raccoo-oo-oon
Release The Bats CD/2×LP
Raccoo-oo-oon's final album really does sound like the final throes of a group going down fighting, raging against the dying of the light with admirable determination, but with a sense of fatalism permeating every gasp. It's also far from a quick, painless death – it lasts more than 75 minutes, and the group are determined to make the listener feel every second. The Iowa ensemble have rarely been the most focused of outfits, but on this album they truly flail, reverb-laden vocals drowning in sorrow and bitterness while drums pound and clatter desperately and guitars and keyboards melt together into a sloppy miasma of misery punctuated by intervals of gulping defiance and denial. It's rare that a group document their own dissolution as frankly and accurately as this, thankfully. Raccoo-oo-oon's energetic parting shot is as sublime as it is depressing.

Pocahaunted

Sleepy Sun
Embrace
ATP Recordings CD
San Francisco sextet Sleepy Sun occupy a space that has, in recent years, been staked out by Canadian retro-savants Black Mountain and their sister group The Pink Mountaintops, in which the roots rock of Creedence Clearwater Revival and The Allman Brothers cohabit supposedly harmoniously with the Krautrock of Can and Faust. Sleepy Sun leave themselves just as open to accusations of fake-psych flummery, replicating Jaki Liebezeit rhythms, Neil Young/Jerry Garcia melodies and Black Sabbath riffs with such slavish faithfulness that their own identity is either obscured or conspicuous by its absence. *Embrace* isn't a bad album – its performances are tight and professional – but it suffers from a dispiriting lack of character. Their sincerity isn't in question, it's just that the group sincerely love their influences and just as sincerely wish to emulate them, all at once, without adding much of their own. This approach occasionally throws up something of note – "Sleepy Son" and "Golden Artefact" are pleasantly dreamy stoner reveries while the vast, arching riff that bisects "White Dove" is hard to disparage – but for the most part this stylistic necrophilia results in a severe case of anrel ennui. □

Critical Beats

Reviewed by **Joe Muggs**

The Aliens
Sunlamp Show EP
Pet Rock Download
Closely following Prins Thomas's conjuring of Arctic Morricone atmospheres from Doves' "Kingdom Of Rust", London's Disco Bloodbath further mine the possibilities of Northern European cosmic disco for extreme melancholia with their reworking of the title track by the ex-Bete Band members The Aliens. Removing all song structure, their steady disco kickdrum takes the psychedelic pop backing vocal harmonies and Balearic pianos for a long hike through icy Scotch mist at a plodding pace, occasionally rising to hilltops where light seeps in at the top of the cloud cover. The Aliens' own John Maclean eka Manmouse takes the same song to a more Gothic version of Superman's Fortress of Solitude. Cluster-style synths swirling around the turrets like ghosts.

Arcadian
Fly Vision
DC Recordings 12"
Another custodian of the B-boy aesthetic in club music, East Anglian scratch DJ Alan Dobson brings extraordinarily high production values to instrumental hiphop as Hungry Ghost, but it's as Arcadian that he has really shone, rebuilding less explored genres like go-go, boogie and freestyle for the post-dubstep generation. "Fly Vision" channels Herbie Hancock even more vividly than Kode9 has been doing lately, but keeps its rubberised funk individual with pots 'n' pans percuss on and gradual total dub disintegration, a short "reprise" suggests Liquid Liquid meeting DC label boss J Saul Kane uptown. "Torque", meanwhile drenches The Junkyard Orchestra in wet resonance, alternating slap-bass wigging-out with rude Skweee riffs.

Bashy featuring Toddla T
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire
GGI/Rags To Riches Download
Virus Syndicate
Mosquito EP
Contagious Music Download
A new swagger is appearing in Grime, bubbling rave energy increasingly replacing the ice cold anti-flow of the music's original beats. Quoting Bassline and B'more, but also far less fashionable electro House, Hard House and breaks sounds, Sheffield's Toddla T provides relentless kinetic energy that makes Bashy's traditional get-money narrative ("*I'm counting Elizabeth's heads*") sound wildly assured rather than grimly, even bitterly aspirational, as has often been the case in Grime. It's not quite "A Milli", but the confidence of the track is breathtaking nonetheless. Mancunians Virus Syndicate have always played to the dancefloor, and on "Vibrator" they deliver one of UK MC culture's greatest party tracks yet, celebrating drugs, fashion and "*Friday night passion where anything might happen*" while a joyously bouncing "138 Trek"-descended dnbstep/electro House hybrid with sirens and rave stabs defies you to stand still. These tracks more than ever suggest a future for British MCs where commerciality and creativity can not only coexist but mutually reinforce one another.

EVS
Let It Go/Cumulus/Dub4U
Studio Rockers 12"
Rotterdam producer EVS – releasing on Moody Boy Tony Thorpe's Studio Rockers label – looks outwards to a wider network of electronic music. Key track "Cumulus" has churchy analogue background synths and sonorous portamento squeals that could easily have appeared on GPR or Apollo some 15 years ago, but also a careworn sense of melodic progression and production gloss that suggest more recent Kompakt releases. There are more obvious dubstep signifiers in the ragga vocal on "Let It Go" and the wobble and warp of "Dnb4u", but even so, in their sound choices, dynamics and production style both have strong suggestions that they are part of a European melodic electronica tradition as much as they are anything to do with Croydon. But whichever way round you look at it, these are occasionally powerfully affecting club tracks, end whatever their influences, are anything but pastiche or nostalgia-mining.

Grandeurs Of Delusion
Night Of The Flavigator
NozL 12"
With their involvement in the Community Scratch Games, London and North East England based NozL and sister imprint Bloodied Blade are a nexus for B-boy sensibilities in European underground music. Following Lone Wolf's unique hybrids of dubstep with Jungle and Metal, they turn their attention here to fabulously rude and ugly rave-influenced warehouse electrobass: six tracks dripping with Detroit/Den Haag funk embellished with some vintage Hardcore hoovers and slathered with squirts and spurts of virtuoso scratching. Performing similarly to the 303 in Acid House, the slurpy, ever-changing scratched sounds perfectly counterpoint electro's mechanistic bounce, and the sense of human physical movement in them is irresistible.

Joker
Do It/Psychedelic Runway
Kapsize 12"
Joker & Ginz
Purple City/Re-Up
Kapsize 12"
The sense of elegant, shark-eyed danger in Joker's tracks is made all the more unsettling by their ambition. In terms of sheer production gloss, and the way his lead lines achieve the vainglorious swagger one might expect on, say, a TI backing track – even as the rawness of the Grime basslines and splattering dubstep snares keeps his feet in the raves of Bristol – this music feels like it is moving onwards and upwards, dragging UK Bass music out of its cellars and demonstrating how it could attain US hiphop's periodic ability to be both ruthlessly commercial and rampantly avant garde. Joker's own 12" emphesises space with the vocoders and Grime pizzicato melodies of "Do It" and the solemnly anthemic buzzing lead of "Psychedelic Runway" allowed to build at their own pace. His release with Bristol based American Ginz (aka sometime breaks producer 30Hz), conversely, is densely packed with sound from the off. Chirrup-ing melodies ride sustained electrocution bass sounds on "Purple City", and "Re-Up" is a juddering juggernaut of triplet riffs. Where this sound might go is anyone's guess, but even now, in its thorough exploration of the territory it inhabits and its promise of greater things, it is already awe-inspiring in its assurance.

Rusko/Surkin/Clipz
Bionic Commando Remixes
Bionic Recordings Download
Take three of the most obvious, straightahead producers in their respective genres (dubstep-electro House-end drum 'n' bass respectively), let them return to their childhood and watch their imaginations run riot. Given a vintage 8-bit arcade game theme to play with, Rusko takes his tendency for whipcrack pitchbends and precipitous drops to the nth degree. Surkin trips out in a cartoon disco, and Clipz careens through a digital fever dream, nipping pixels out of everything he collides with. This sounds like the most fun each producer has had in an age, and is the most fun chip music has sounded in long time.

Rustie
Bad Science EP
Wireblock 12"
In which the young Glaswegian proves over four tracks (plus a more straightforwerd Drexlcyan electro remix by Heinrich Mneller) that while his Aquacrunk style is a formula, it is a flexible and powerful one. Everything about it is over the top: the blurt and gloop of the "Bernie Worrell in a clown car" lead synth lines, the lurch and crunch of beats that imagine a world where Drexciya produced Outkast: the plain silliness of the violent arpeggios and tempo ascent into sheer mania in "Zig Zag Reprise", or the pitchshifted 808 snare fills in "Shadow Enter". But it is absolutely not about pointless excess, nor is it glutted music. If it were, it would simply not pass muster with the fiercely demanding audiences of Glasgow, for whom grassroots hedonism and Techno/electro connoisseurship are intimately tied together. So, beneath the eclecticism, beneath the off-centre psychedelic clowning, this music retains a killer instinct – the hardcore totalitarian will to power to take over the club and everyone in it. □

new from
Cold Blue music

Peter Garland
String Quartets (CB0031)

Entrancing quartets performed by the British group Apartment House. Among Garland's finest music.

"Peter's quartet [No. 1] is the most beautiful thing since Corelli."
—Lou Harrison

"Garland ... avatar of an American experimental tradition ... a composer of mesmerizing music ... in many ways, the musical conscience of my generation."
—Kyle Gann, *Chamber Music* magazine

"One of our true originals."
—Robert Carl, *Fanfare*

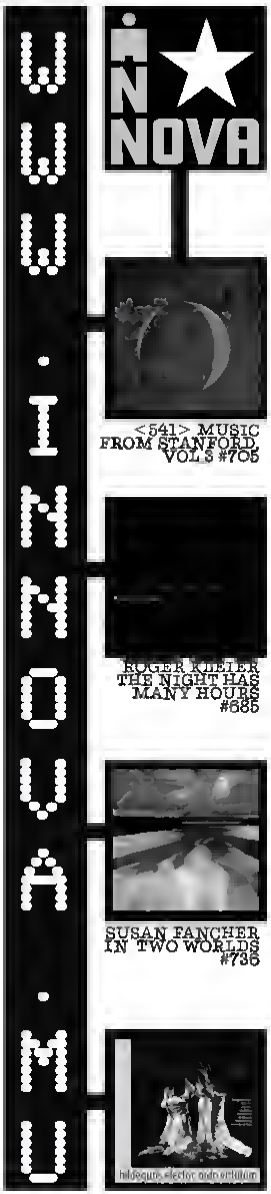
John Luther Adams
the place we began (CB[illegible])

Evocative electro-acoustic works that conceptually tie Adams's earliest music to his present soundscapes and installations.

"Adams's major works have the appearance of being beyond style; they transcend the squabbles of contemporary classical music."
—Alex Ross, *The New Yorker*

"There's a sense of vast, open space in John Luther Adams's music that's without a ready parallel among American composers."—Marc Geelhoed, *Time Out Chicago*

www.coldbluemusic.com


IN NOVA
<541> MUSIC FROM STANFORD, VOL 5 #705
ROGER KLEIER THE NIGHT HAS MANY HOURS #685
SUSAN FANCHER IN TWO WORLDS #735
hildegurls electric ordo virtutum
HILDEGURLS ELECTRIC ORDO VIRTUTUM #712
THE DIFFERENT DRUMMER ...IS ON OUR LABEL

Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

eXXo
No Idlers EP
Killtone 12"
Maybe special stacks need to be built for the giant rolling stock coming out of the eXXo sheds in Leeds's Chapeltown. Still playing with the bass signatures of dubstep, but freying the wobbles into edgy growls, eXXo are crossing North/South boundaries and going deeper into bass and dub origins while others get 'Funky'. "Hell Plate" is a processional writ en for a deed dubmaster, complete with disembodied voice, while "Pritti Myce" has a *"lively up yerself"* repeated chant and megaphoned-in vocal over reverbed tom-tom percussion and slow metallic thuds. On the flip, "Thugg Step" picks up the pace with a nicely sliced *"Play music!"* sample from Glen Brown before the sledgehammer low end hits, the spacier title track acts as decompression.

Easy Star All-Stare
Easy Stor's Lonely Hearts Dub Bond
Easy Star CD
After 2003's *Dub Side Of The Moon* and 2006's *Radiodread*, Easy Star All-Stars just cannot resist the gravitational pull of the creative lowest common denominator by going for the motherlode of music burned into the circuits of half the Western world. Feelings of hysteria and disgust arise from listening to the likes of Steel Pulse, Michael Rose, Lucieno, Suger Minott (a painfully extended dnb mix of "When I m Sixty-Forr"), Frank e Paul and Max Romeo, making their way through lyrics that have long succumbed to karaoke singalong status. Things perk up only briefly as The Mighty Diamonds tackle a strictly non-ironic "Getting Better", and if enyone can alchemise this effair it's Daddy U-Roy who, with Third World's Bunny Rugs, converts tea drinking with "Lovely Rita" to tea smoking. Just incredible.

Joh Melodie & Slimmeh Sound
Seek King Ras Tafari/Dub
Roots Tribe 7"
Amsterdam's Tim Beumgarten (ake Slimmah Sound) moves on from Brish And Shadow to launch his own nu roots imprint Roots Tribe as a home for his future releases. "Seek King Ras Tafari" and its dub versions have been played out on Euro sound systems for the past few months, echieving enthemic status. Voiced by Amsterdam's originel singermen Jah Melodie, the vocal side is e fairly formuleic devotionel chent, but the flip is the one, with the rhythm's muscles tensed and stretched through the restructured mix.

George Phang
Power House Selecter's Choice Volume 1
VP/17 North Parade 4×CD
First of two monster Power House selections each containing 80 tracks, covering the best of the 300-odd singles issued through the 1980s. Phang met Sly & Robbie during their Revolutioneries incarnetion, and with them to created a modern reggae sound thet bridged the roots, dancehall and dig tal eras. The label's biggest hit, "Greetings", is Half Pint's ragamuffin anthem, characterised by Sly's repeated rapidfire drum rolls – still a jump-up certainty on eny dancefloor. Like many of the selections here, the rhythm revisited a Studio One classic. Don Drummond Junior's "Heavenless" – re-rubbed e further nine times back-to-back on this set. Frankie Paul and Suger Minott are heavily featured, as are conscions deejays Josey Wales and Charlie Chaplin. An enmissable revival, even thongh not enough dub vers ons are included.

Phase One
Dub-Wise Volumes 1 & 2
Phase One CD/2×LP
The vinyl versions of these dub sets have been available, on end off, since their first appearance back in the late 1970s. *Volume 1* came out of Joe Gibbs Studio end was mixed at Channel One by Ernie Hookim, using Sly, Robbie and The Revolutionaries. It was mainly a dub companion to The Chantells' 1978 vocal album *Waiting In The Park*, with the addition of "Sufferer's Heights", the version to Lopez Walker's roots classic "Jah Jah New Garden". The dubs by Bunny Tom Tom on *Volume 2* – overell e less cohesive set – were sourced from e verlety of vocals from Lopez Walker egain, Bleck Uhuru end Phillip Fraser, but the overall feel of both elbums is prime 70s dub, with fine horn sections and driving rhythms propelled by Sly's developing techniqnes incinding flashes of early syndrums. Also ont now is *Collectors Edition Vol 1*, including some of the vocal companions to the dubs collected here.

Slim Smith & Friends
Conversation Stylee
Original Super Power CD
The originel version album, end still the best, is *Yamaha Skank*, dating from 1974. Produced by Ruple Edwards using the rhythm to Slim Smith's beautiful "My Conversation" – sold to Edwards by producer Bunny Lee – this album stretched the mix variation into what then seemed infinity, with DJ takes, wild intros, new vocals, tr-butes, rewinds, instrumentals and dubs. The effect was sensational, and its impact still resonates today. This relssue is based on the album as refurbished by Steve "Blood & Fire" Barrow during his Trojen sojourn, and with the addition of three bonus tracks retitled "Let There Be Version". Listening back to Joe White's melodica version "President Rock", Bongo Herman's "Eternal Drums" and The Sncccss All Stars "Doctor Satan's Echo Chamber", it's the template for all the sonic recycling that followed.

Soom T/Mungo's Hifi
Flying High/Juicy Punch Riddim
MAFFI 7"
The third piece in the Maffi series, with Copenhagen's Firehouse Sound re-filing rough 1980s-style Casio riddims custom-built for DJs in the dance. "Flying High" is spat out in alternate fast chats and sweet rhymes by Glasgow heroine MC Soom T on top of rapidly bouncing electro drums, stuttering bass and synths. Her toasts are on e par with the likes of MIA, instantly recognisable and capable of conjuring ultra-catchy hooklines. On the B side, Mungo's HiFi run a stop-start robotic dub, layering the bass up against the percussion and ghosting in whispers of Soom T. These raw digital dnbs are difficnlt to re-fix without bringing redundant FX, but Cra g end the ascendant Glasgow massive bring a Tubby-like classic discipline to the mix.

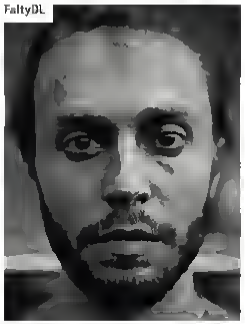
Various
Evolution Of Dub Volume 1 The Origin Of The Species
Greensleeves 4×CD
First in a promised series of four disc sets, each with four classic originel dub albums. First up are two classics from the mid-1970s, *Dub From The Roots* and *The Roots Of Dub*, both Bunny Lee-produced and mixed by King Tubby, together with Niney The Observer's *Dubbing With The Observer*. There's also the very rare *Dub Serial*, released by Joe Gibbs in a very limited pressing in late 1972, end among the very first entirely dub elbums. At the time, dubs were constrained to sound system use, and consequently *Dub Serial* was only merketed through Gibbs's Mail Order Service – as *Dub Sequelde* – for the astonishing price of 50 dollars. The style is restra ned and anstere certainly compared with the *African Dub* series that soon followed, with raw drum and bass dubs to Gibbs hits of the time. "Satta" provided the rhythm for Peter Tosh's "Here Comes The Judge", and Burning Spear's "He Prayed" wes recycled for the riddim cut later by Big Youth as "Joe Frazier". Good news for serious dubheads is that *Dub Serial* is promised in a single vinyl cut soon.

Yebby You
Dub Prophecy: Yabby You Meets The Aggrovators At King Tubby's Studio
Attack Download
King Tubby's Prophesy Of Dub was first issued in a blank sleeve in 500 copies back in 1975, but it helped to establish artist and producer Vivian Jackson (aka Yabby You) as one of the pre-eminent names in roots reggae. This album collates dubs from *Prophesy Of Dub* and later colleborations with the dubmaster. Yabby You brought out the deepest and herdest mixing from Tubby, denser, richer and more righteous. In addition, the pleying of the musicians on these sessions was exceptional. Check Tommy McCook's sax and flute on "Dub Trap" (the version to "Death Trap") and "Judgement In Dub". But, in the word of the Jesus Dread himself: beware! Though the music here is fine (some lifted from vinyl), much of it is still available in digital form on Blood & Fire's 47 track collection *Jesus Dread*, with rare and extended mixes, and also vie the CD edition of *Prophesy Of Dub*. □

Electronica

Reviewed by **Chris Sharp**

FaltyDL



B12/Redcell
B12 Records Archive Volume 6
B12 2×CD/Download
It's a mammoth project, and it would be tempting to describe it as a vainglorious one. But, especially for listeners of a certain age, there's a sweet magic to the music on B12 Records which justifies the epic dimensions. Since it was resurrected in 2005, the label has been making available on CD the complete recorded works – including much previously unheard music – of Britain's most quietly influential Techno team. When the first B12 vinyls started to appear in 1991, they offered an elegant alternative to the slew of novelty rave records that dominated the racks at the time, and, although Mike Golding and Steve Rutter made few public statements, their artwork and track titles spoke volumes about their affinity with the out-of-time sounds of Detroit. Such dogged classicism has lent their work a surprising longevity – this collection, the sixth of seven double CD packages, gathers together experimental pieces and cassette-only releases, and even though it's peppered with naive snatches from a 1992 Belgian radio interview, it still manages to exude an otherworldly and entirely seductive poise.

FaltyDL
Love Is A Liability
Planet Mu CD/2×LP/Download
As a former sushi chef, New Yorker Drew Lustman has an inbuilt advantage when it comes to precision slicing, and he's a fair judge of freshness too. His debut album is a winning blend of hazy emotion and slick rhythmic placement which draws inspiration from the noble NY Garage tradition without ever sounding like a retro rehash. Lustman's nifty two-step rhythms skip and twinkle above a warm bed of pulsating sub-bass, while tricksy one-finger melodies gambol among clouds of vintage synth texture. The stratospheric swoop of "The Shape To Come" demonstrates an awareness of the Artificial Intelligence era; it's a mildly cerebral counterpoint to the soulful vocal samples that pop up in opener "Human Meadow" and the pensive, spacious "Our Loss", but, as *Love Is A Liability* draws to a wistful, slow-motion close, it's clear that, for all his surgical gifts, Lustman is a sentimentalist at heart.

Longstone
Kabuki
Ochre CD
Over 12 years, six albums and a plethora of side projects, Longstone have evolved into a unique proposition. The duo of Mike Ward and Mike Cross have repeatedly opened their compositional process up to the influence of collaborators, which means that musicians as diverse as Will Sergeant, Pete Kember and Fyfe Dangerfield have had an impact on their sound. On *Kabuki*, they've practically transformed themselves into a group. The record has its genesis in 2008's live work, and the basic tracks were recorded, as a six-piece ensemble, in real time. Chris Cundy's plaintive saxophones and Steve Moody's progressive guitars are particularly striking on the first listen, but Stuart Wilding's intricate percussion playing – nimbly woven around the programmed rhythms – and Kev Fox's outlandish splashes of electronic colour contribute just as much to the overall effect. The result is a true hybrid, a questing, indefinable music propelled through reverberant spaces by staccato rhythms and slashes of artful noise.

Yves de Mey
Lichtung
Line CD
Yves de Mey is no stranger to dance music. As Eavesdropper, he's created a string of worthy breakbeat records, and the clubs of his native Brussels have witnessed plenty of his dub Techno DJ sets. But *Lichtung* is something else again – the score for a piece of contemporary choreography performed by the dancer Catherine Jodoin in Hamburg last year. The performance lasted for 35 minutes, taking the shape of a stealthy, slow-motion creep towards the audience from the back of the stage, and the music suggests a similarly protracted cinematic zoom, as de Mey gradually builds from fraught silence to dense thickets of sound. The electronic susurrations and insectile shivers at the beginning of *Lichtung* offer no real surprise, but the introduction of graceful, minimal guitar lines modulates the mood nicely – they're like brushstrokes across a grime-streaked canvas, sketching out the dancer's halting trajectory.

Dieter Moebius
Kram
Klangbad CD
This is his 65th year, but despite his veteran status – and his involvement in as many as 39 albums – it's still difficult to assess Dieter Moebius. There's no doubt that many of the recordings he made as part of Cluster and Harmonia remain untarnished founts of inspiration, but just as much of his work is lacklustre – often whimsical, sometimes slight, sometimes just floating untroubled by any notion of contemporary relevance. *Kram* – his fifth album as a solo artist – doesn't offer any definitive conclusions. The title translates from the German as *Stuff*, and it comes across as a casual assembly of random material rather than anything more tightly argued. That's not to say that it's entirely disposable. A piece like "Deuert" has all the languid, beatific charm of prime Harmonia, and while "Steigert" and "Schwitzt" are little more than loops, they're still richly atmospheric experiences. But at times – during the meandering "Start" and the peevishly aggressive "Rennt" – *Kram* simply feels inessential, and doesn't quite make the case for including Moebius amongst the greats.

Pixel
The Drive
Raster-Noton CD/Download
Pixel – aka erstwhile Danish jazz saxophonist Jon Egeskov – has a history of casting his net wide when it comes to inspiration. His debut album drew on Konnakol, the ancient Indian vocal percussion system, and his second was built around transplanted elements of African dance music. The minimalist electronics of *The Drive*, his third album, has no less of an international outlook, but it's a radical shift, nonetheless. Egeskov describes the album as the soundtrack to an imaginary car journey across the USA. It's a suggestive experience, filled with the hiss of rubber on tarmac and punctuated by dark objects that loom towards the listener before smearing past and disappearing into silence. Although the landscape that it evokes is ambiguous and occasionally downright threatening, *The Drive* is a much more approachable prospect than Pixel's previous releases.

Venetian Snares
Filth
Planet Mu CD/2×LP/Download
The seemingly unstoppable flow of contorted, maddening and occasionally inspired music from Aaron Funk continues with a project that is as provocative and invigorating as anything else in the tangled Venetian Snares discography. A concept album of sorts, *Filth* is a hyperactive rhino charge of a record whose engine room is a serially abused Roland 303. Along with the lashings of demented Acid come the usual Tonrette's Syndrome track titles: "Deep Dicking", "Mongoloid Alien" and (forgive me) "Sploog Guzzlers". It's almost as if Fink will do anything to divert attention away from the considerable subtlety and rigour with which he assembles his madcap missives, concealed amongst the rush of a piece like "Crashing The Yogurt Truck" are time changes of astonishing complexity, flickerfreme dynamic shifts and fragmentary melodies which border on the downright eloquent. "Pussy Skull", which brings the album to a close, vibrates with wit, with rimshots twitching dizzyingly from channel to channel and plangent space-age chords circling like the benign attentions of a higher power.

Wevie Stonder
The Bucket
Cack CD/Download
It's impossible to be ambivalent about Wevie Stonder. Over the course of three previous albums, their dogged penchant for low-budget absurdity has congealed into an instantly recognisable style. *The Bucket* is a fine introduction to their maverick wit – or, depending on your point of view, their relentlessly juvenile tomfoolery. Although it's possible, just occasionally, to distinguish an arch awareness of musical adventurers through the ages ("Shut The Gate" obliquely references Pierre Henry's legendary recordings of a creaking door), most of the time it's a farrago of nonsense perpetrated by the Ministry of Silly Voices with a determinedly scatological streak. There are fake pirate radio phone-ins, keyboard sounds that might have been salvaged from the Woolworths fire sale and lashings of surreal exotica like "Smell People", a queasy fairy tale about a misbegotten dwarf which lurches from vintage lounge music to the Amen break without a pause for breath.

Only the tiniest glimpses of genuine musicality, like the liquid, Latino punk rollercoaster ride that is "Hans Peach", suggest that Wevie Stonder might one day find a way to preach to the currently unconverted.

Anna Zaradny
Mauve Cycles
Musica Genera CD
Although this is the first solo release by the Polish saxophonist, improviser and composer, it suggests that she's already travelled a long road. Zaradny is a graduate of Poznan's prestigious Akademia Muzyczna, who has graduated from a grounding in big band music, through a stint in a Noise rock group called StuckOnCeiling to an assured grasp of experimental electronics. *Mauve Cycles* consists of two lengthy pieces, both of which navigate a tremulous, occluded path between fluctuating white noise and nagging, insistent rhythm. The first piece starts out somewhere between a whisper and a scream – a succession of high-frequency moans arrive, each one sliding weightlessly into place over the last. Harmonics dance nervously at first, before locking together to form confident pulses. Crystalline tones reveal a debt to the electroacoustic tradition, but the avoid oscillations at the low end could have come from the Mika Vainio storehouse. Part two is more meditative, but just as diligently constructed – in all, *Mauve Cycles* reveals Zaradny as a confident, albeit astringent, voice. □

Hiphop

Reviewed by **Nick Sylvester**

Willie Isz

Clipse featuring Kanye West
Kinda Like A Big Deal
Columbia CD/12"/Download

2006's *Hell Hath No Fury* album is a rap classic, but Virginia duo Clipse need a hit on par with 2002's "Grindin'" or "When's The Last Time" if they want to keep blowing *"a hundred-thousand-person recession/with no second guessing"*. "Kinda Like A Big Deal" is an enormous song. Those booming tom-toms sounds courtesy of DJ Khalil, pushed way up in the mix, could short the subwoofer if you're not careful. And the MCs have an equally cocksure friend in Khalil's menacing psychedelic guitar lick. Malice says *"I'm the reason the hood need a dental plan"* and it hits like a *Kill Bill* kick to the teeth. Even Kanye comes raw dog, no autotune, *"alligator soufflé"*. Thing is, the "Kinda" of "Kinda Like A Big Deal" isn't mock-modest, just accurate. The track lacks a big sung hook, and without one, Clipse are stuck with the diminutive.

The-Dream
Love Vs Money
Radio Killa/Def Jam CD/LP/Download

Atlanta's The-Dream daylights as producer Terius Nash, who has written pop hits for Rihanna, Beyonce, Mariah Carey, Britney Spears. He favours bright, bold melodies, but tempers them with brute syncopation and muscular drum and synth sounds – audio illusions, the way his slow songs keep their pulse, the way his fast songs have so much breathing room. Four songs in the middle of *Love Vs Money* attack the album's theme – the way money affects relationships – distilling The-Dream's talent, and underlining the charm of a well-made R&B song. He reinvents the sonic vocabulary, with the 16th note machine gun kick drum pummelling in "Love Vs Money", and keeps his humour playful: unsarcastic (*"I'm all up on you/Like a monster truck"*), all for one brief moment of blinding sincerity: *"When love is the problem/Nothing can solve it."*

The Fly Girlz
Da Brats From De' Ville
True Panther CD/Download

The Fly Girlz are five young teenagers from Brownsville, Brooklyn, who rap Old School playground rhymes over moody electro-industrial instrumentals courtesy of Nathan Corbin, who performs with the freeform improvisational group Excepter. The Girlz wrote lyrics, and Corbin made the beats to fit the content. What results is otherworldly, equal parts 8-girl and Throbbing Gristle. So many twentysomethings want this sound – unselfconscious, effortless "outsider" – but there are some things about being 14 and Brownsvillian you just can't fake. Corbin did a masterful job bringing out those qualities – reverb-treated vocals that recall ESG, dark midtempo synthesizer beats that build and throb and foil the girls' unfailing positivity. A snippet of their booth chatter: *"Whotchu all doin' over the weekend? I ain't doin' nothin'."*

Kid Cudi featuring Kanye West, Common and Lady Gaga
I Poke Her Face
Nah label Download

Electro-pop artist Lady Gaga has this wildly popular, ambiguously sexual song out now called "Poker Face". Just in case you couldn't guess what this song is about, this rapping threesome are here to help. The rough-sex raps that come of their reinterpretation are brutish, a bad kind of blunt – as if to ensure that people will get the gag on first listen then move on. Too bad, for two reasons. First, the instrumental is a smart, sparse cabaret throwback, sampling an untreated version of Gaga's vocals, a Betty Boop-like hiccup stripping the singer of her digital poker face. Second, Kanye's sideways diss on the crunchy white rapper phenomenon named Asher Roth: *"I've got seniority with the sorority/So that explains why I have college."* It only Roth had left it at that.

Mr Lif
I Heard It Today
Bloodshot Tactical Enterprises CD/Download

The Boston/Philly rapper is entitled to his opinions, however superficial, about the government bailout packages, the crumbling markets, the deification of Barack Obama, but the dude could stand to be less pedantic: *"They were willing to give people with bad credit loans/Because they knew within a few years, we're out of homes/And they can buy up all the same properties"* is an actual lyric on this album. Maybe rap is better suited to microeconomics, which Lif dealt with on his fantastic *I Phantom* album back in 2002. His voice – a nasally monotone, as if speaking through an electrolarynx – remains a pleasure over the scorched-earth instrumentals of *I Heard It Today*. The haunting piano figures in "Head High" and the spidery bassline in "What About Us?" are top notch, among his discography's best beats. If only Lif could have found a way to be sceptical without being such a downer – especially when he admits his science is spitballed: *"I analyse the globe and watch the story unfold,"* he says in "Head High", under the influence of the *"sticky green leaf"*.

Odd Nosdam
TIME Soundtrack
Anticon CD/Download

Element Skateboards tapped Anticon co-founder Odd Nosdam to score a 2007 skate flick here released as *TIME Soundtrack*: woozy hiphop instrumentals, shoegazey at times. If you've seen Gus van Sant's skater movie *Paranoid Park*, Nosdam's soundscapes might remind you of the director's dreamlike shots in the halfpipe – both speak to skateboarding's inadvertent ballet. "One For Dallas" feels like the climax, with a heaving *Loveless*-like whammy riff: the toybox piano and heavily reverbed drums. "We Bad Apples" has the twangy hip-pop feel you might expect from a Beck instrumental: slow paced, really crackly, the melody sprawling and soft-focused in no rush to resolve.

Nick Noss
Deeper Than Rap
Maybach Music/Def Jam CD/LP/Download

"I'm too cool for lame dudes to ridicule/I laugh while I'm doing laps in the swimming pool." Ross raps in "Usual Suspects". The song is humid and soulful, and you almost forget that the idea of this 300 pound Miami rapper doing laps in a swimming pool was only months ago comedia maxima. But this beef Ross has had with 50 Cent over Ross's prison cop past has only worked to the Boss's benefit: he's pushed rap beyond Where You're From into the pageantry of Where You're At. *Deeper Than Rap* is a Cinderella-like masquerade, a prom night with a 1990s rap theme – hulking live drumbeats with turnaround breaks and huge sung hooks, strings and saxophone flourishes, innumerable popular guest spots, songs about Maybachs and yacht clubs and cocaine and Mafia movies and sumptuous meals. All this, in the middle of a world recession. *"I'm a greedy genius, no reference to the ugly clothes,"* Ross might respond to that, which is to say: his rapping ability has, on this third album, matched his command. And when you are as indomitable as Ross is this year, you don't have to reflect the times, or even contradict them. You can instead offer an alternative, and remind everyone of what was possible, and remains possible in hiphop. The year's biggest surprise.

Rye Rye featuring MIA
Bang
Star Trak Download

Ryeisha Berrain, the 18 year old Baltimore rapper who records as Rye Rye, has worked with Blaqstarr, Diplo, Sinden, MIA, and other producers pushing Baltimore Club into the hiphop mainstream. "Bang" is the lead-off track for the soundtrack to Hollywood franchise film *Fast And Furious*, considering how stark this song is, it's quite a coup. The song rides an overclocked Think break, but Blaqstarr increasingly confident, resists the urge to overstuff. What we get is MIA's listless *"Bang! Bang! Bang!"*, that's about it. So many Baltimore tracks come full blast, filling every cranny with synth wriggles and whistles as if we might lose interest otherwise.

DJ Smallz & DJ Neptune
Southern Smoke TV Volume 1
Nah label CD/Download

In early April, several mixtape DJs found themselves sued by Lil Wayne's Young Money Entertainment for copyright infringement – shocking because Wayne's career benefitted so much from working with them. There are exclusives on *Southern Smoke TV Volume 1*, but they come prefaced with some wondering aloud: *"DJ Smallz may be found in critical condition after playing this..."* Tempting fate, they put Wayne's new tracks first. Another early highlight is Birdman's monstrous new Neptunes single "Champion", whose elongated synth arpeggiator twinkles recall the music of *the Final Fantasy* games. Atlanta producer Zaytoven has several tracks towards the end, increasingly a point of no wonder. His instrumentals – modest slow-moving synth licks set to soft double-time clicks – have the similar but different dependability of reggae riddims, and man does he churn them out: "Gorgeous" and "First Day Out" for the newly free Gucci Mane, "Mathematics" for Yung LA, a bouncy "Too Fly" for Playa Fly, nicking the melody of "Get Up Stand Up".

Willie Isz
Georgiavania
Lex CD/Download

Khujo from Goodie Mob and prolific Philly producer Jneiro Jarel team up here as Willie Isz, a hip-pop experiment in the warbling Parliament like tradition of Dungeon Family and OutKast. Let's gloss over the obvious Gnarls Barkley comparisons, how paranoia/identity crisis number "Loner" has "Crazy" envy, and note that it's nice to hear Jarel moving past Madlib and Dilla pastiche and realising a sound all his own: drum kicks felt not heard, warm synthesizer hooks that billow like fluffy white clouds ("Violet Heart Box"). Harder, industrial textures pervert the screwball funk numbers ("Georgiavania"), keeping Willie Isz from the kitsch problem that plagues Gnarls. This doesn't have to be a one-off. □

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by **Barry Witherden**

Jimmy Bennington & Julien Priester
Portraits And Silhouettes
Thatswan! CD
This excellent 2005 session was first issued in quantities about 18 months ago, but is being made more widely available only now. There's a 35 year age gap between Priester and Bennington, but they play like soul twins. Priester has covered pretty much every wharf on the waterfront – he has played with ensembles as varied as Duke Ellington and Sunn O))). Bo Diddley and Sun Ra, Lionel Hampton and Herbie Hancock – and he relates some of his history on the final track. Bennington can't quite match that range, but he studied with Elvin Jones for eight years and was his manager for the end of that period. There's an intimacy and a reflective quality throughout these trombone and percussion duets, even in the less tranquil or more abstract passages, and the old cliche about music as conversation is particularly appropriate here. The best music reveals its treasures gradually, and so far each hearing of *Portraits And Silhouettes* has disclosed additional things of value.

Brötzmann/Kondo/Pupillo/ Nilssen-Love
Hairy Bones
Okkadisk CD
The press release references Die Like A Dog and Last Exit, and I wouldn't argue with that. Recorded live at Amsterdam's celebrated Bimhuis, host to many great improv sessions over the years, *Hairy Bones* could stand toe to toe with them all. We've known what to expect from Peter Brötzmann for more than four decades, but even when sticking to his main schtick rather than flabbergasting us with the lyricism of the likes of *14 Love Poems* or the relatively conventional *Reserve*, he can still shock and surprise. If only by demonstrating that the ferocity of his playing is undiminished in his 67th year. On electric trumpet and stupendous form, Toshinori Kondo (Brötzmann's longterm colleague from Die Like A Dog) is somewhat less belligerent but no less intense. Bassist Massimo Pupillo and drummer Paal Nilssen-Love tirelessly stir the cauldron, whether mixing it freeform or locking into a groove. There are a couple of fairly restrained episodes and Kondo weaves in several subversively melodic passages, but the purpose is, of course, to ensure that the surrounding sustained and merciless assault on our sensibilities is even more staggering. Catharsis rules, KO.

Collective 4tet
In Transition
Leo CD
This album is dedicated to the memory of Jeff Hoyer, who died in December 2006. He was the trombonist with the 4tet for the first few years of its existence and, given the accomplishment and individuality of his playing, his shoes are big ones to fill. His place is now occupied by Arthur Brooks (trumpet/flugelhorn), who has melted into the group as effectively as if he had been there since the start, neither shifting the balance nor simply echoing Hoyer's role. The group retains its impressively cohesive identity with William Parker's athletic bass echieving the tricky double of propelling and anchoring proceedings. The 4tet's work is multilayered yet not too dense, with an overall airiness absent from most improv sessions, thanks to the often jubilant momentum provided by the crisp drumming of Heinz Geisser and the glittering piano of Mark Hennen.

Nathen Davis
If
Universal Sound CD
It must have been around 1979 that I saw Davis with The Paris Reunion Band at the Town & Country Club in London, and about eight years later when I heard him with Dusko Goykovich at the 100 Club. His appearances were rare enough then, and became rarer. The legends say that in the 1960s he refused an offer to join The Jazz Messengers after a European tour, and also turned down a contract with Blue Note. So hardly surprising he's a cult figure. Though this album comes stamped with the hugely irritating term "deep jazz" (which usually means funk-inflected jazz-lite with an obvious beat and little rhythmic flexibility), it's a fine example of where the mainstream flowed in 1976. Only 1000 copies of the original LP on Davis's own Tomorrow International label were pressed, and their eBay price is around £40. It it doesn't quite live up to its reputation, it's still pretty good. Occasionally the group seem poised to plummet into a morass of formulaic fusion, but Davis brings them back from the brink and leads them into the righteous realms of true funky jazz. Bassist Abraham Laboriel is, as ever, mind-bogglingly powerful and virtuosic, and pianist George Caldwell contributes some tasty solos, but it is Davis especially when showcasing his gloriously gritty tenor, who connects most directly to the heart and soul.

Scott Fields Ensemble
Music For This American Life
Neos CD
The bassist here, Sebastian Gramss, featured on Das Mollsche Gesetz's *Catalogue Of Improvisation*, which I reviewed in *The Wire* 303. DMG's improvisations follow two rules: no piece should last more than 60 seconds, and each should be followed by a pause of the same duration as the music. In contrast, Scott Fields allows the musicians to stretch out, and all five tracks last around a quarter-hour. With a line-up like this (electric guiter, cello, bass, drums), the label 'chamber jazz' always hovers menacingly, but it is not particularly helpful as shorthand. Fields and co produce thoughtful music, but not unduly cerebral, dry or cautious – the improvisations are adventurous, constantly engaging and often passionate. The last Fields album I heard, *Denouement* (Clean Feed), took more than a decade to get a proper release. Fortunately, this very impressive session has taken only a year to escape. Incidentally, *This American Life* is a Chicago Public Radio show that its producers describe as "movies for the radio", and if this CD is anything to go by, it must be addictive listening.

Led Bib

Peul ven Kemenade
Two Horns And A Bass
Buma/Stemra CD
Alto saxophonist van Kemenade has a slightly raw, honey-and-pepper sound which lends itself to both outside and more conventional repertory performance. He's heard here in duo with pianists Harmen Fraanje and Michiel Braam, with a trio with trumpeter Eric Vloeimans and bassist Wire Mahieu, and in an intriguing quintet setting with Mahieu and others. There's also a 12 minute DVD of a different quintet (Ray Anderson, Frank Möbus, Ernst Glerum, Han Bennink) doing "In A Sentimental Mood". In a way you've never heard it done before. An essentially lyrical player, Van Kemenade always has a song to hand, even when he's blowing in an edgier style. His blowing on Fraanje's 'Nyumbani Kwetu' is exquisite and there's real punch to the two short tracks with Braam.
Brian Morton

Joëlle Léandre & Quentin Sirjecq
Out Of Nowhere
Actuelle CD
She'd probably dislike the description, but Joëlle Léandre must be regarded as a pillar of the improv and exploratory music establishment. Pianist and composer Sirjacq has been one of her students at Mills College, California, and seems equally at home in the realms of free improv and 'serious' music. Although they are a generation apart, the two musicians are remarkably homogeneous: the result not only of having played together for some while, but of careful and responsive listening during performance – the mark of the best improvisors. They produce music of such coherence and cohesiveness that most of the 11 pieces on the album sound like meticulously considered compositions, even though they were improvised from scratch. Exemplary.

Led Bib
Sensible Shoes
Cuneform CD
This is the sound of a group having fun. It's a glorious melange of styles, moods and sounds, and whilst various other genres are referenced, jazz is always in there somewhere – not that that really matters. If you count their *Live* EP, this is Led Bib's fourth album, and de facto bandleader/drummer Mark Holub has called it their "coming of age". Fortunately, that doesn't mean they have become shackled by sobriety or prudence. Holub elaborates: "We wanted to go into it really freely, like we do live." They evoke such worthy antecedents as Naked City, Dr Umezu and Xero Slingsby & The Works, or in their calmer moments nod in homage to John Surman and Delia Derbyshire. Some tracks obliquely chronicle the trials of modern post civilisation, such as flatpacks and call centres, but rather than moan, Led Bib cuts into them like a hot chainsaw through butter.

Schindler & Richter
Kleine Klassiker
Arch Music CD
These eight duets by Stephan Richter on guitars and Udo Schindler on clarinet, soprano and tenor saxes encompass a range of moods, but most have a similar stern structural underpinning, so I was not surprised to discover that Schindler's day job is as an architect. There is always a strong element of controlled development, even in the freer passages. The music hangs together admirably with a consistent sense of logic, but without ever becoming overly academic or unemotional, and there are visceral episodes alongside the cerebral ones. Schindler's soprano work frequently nods to the Even Parker tradition, whilst his tenor tone is a joy: big and bootiny but never coarse or lacking in shading. □

Modern Composition

Reviewed by **Philip Clark**

John Cage
Cage Performs Cage
Mode CD
This CD contains performances of the text based *Empty Words* and the 'number piece' *One*' recorded in April 1991, a year before John Cage's death. His mellifluous speech patterns always did seem like the sort of voice a composer ought to have and, as Rob Haskins's sleevenotes suggest, advanced old age adds a lived-in, vaguely mysterious tone to his spoken inflections. *Empty Words* (1973–74) is based on Thoreau's *Journals* in which text transmutes into music as the reader gradually drops punctuation, then individual words, until free-floating syllables and letters dissolve towards silence. This performance picks up the 90 minute process 30 minutes before the end, and pianist Yvar Mikhashoff underscores the recitation with extracts from Cage's 1950s *Music For Piano*. The unintended counterpoint between voice and piano, and the unaffected sonic beauty, is culled from the very marrow of Cagelan aesthetics – *One*' likewise.

James Mulcre Drew
Ammoting Degree Zero
New World CD
The Third Stream lives! At least in three of these pieces by this veteran New York composer. *Ammoting Degree Zero* is scored for a mixed wind, string and percussion ensemble, and an off-blues trombone theme, sepia harmonies and a double bass that invokes reminiscences of Duke Ellington records. *Bonoroo Breaks* for two trombones and drums does similarly for New Orleans funeral music, and the misspelled *In Memoriam JC Higginbottom* is dedicated to the great early jazz trombonist JC Higginbotham. But then *12 Centers Breathing* for viola and percussion and *Solemn Acts In Rain* for violin and piano suggest allegiance to New York School composers like Morton Feldman and Earle Brown. Some radiant sounds, but a confused legacy.

Clemens Gadenstätter
Songbook
Col Legno CD
Songbook for saxophones, percussion, piano and electronic distortion is comic book modernism. Although Gadenstätter doesn't specify his exact sources, the piece is based around melodic and harmonic structures familiar from pop songs, which are shredded and then tossed back together in a higgledy-piggledy montage. Saxophonist Gerald Preinfalk doubles on soprano and tenor but constantly strains at the highest register of both horns, a contrivance that gives the music a bleached artifice. Every pop song needs its hook, but Gadenstatter turns his into sequences of decorative trills and steamrolling tremolos, as his electronics drizzle distorted amplification over the ensemble. The solo piano *akkor(d/t)anz*, played by Florian Müller, subjects cliches from Romantic piano music to a comparable process. Clever and chancy music – it made me laugh, too.

Philip Glass
Songs And Poems
Orange Mountain Music CD
Everyone from Cecil Taylor to your mom enjoys being rude about Glass. If the idea of a 20 minute cello suite stacked with Irish arpeggios and Bach-like harmonic sequences sounds like purgatory, Glass somehow makes it work. *Songs And Poems* was written in 2007 for cellist Wendy Sutter, and her deeply physical and sonorously boomy performance undoubtedly helps the cause. But the music has a sincerity and technical ingenuity that makes it impossible to ignore – Glass's arpeggios are slowed right down and blossom into insistantly stated melodies, while his harmonic thinking cuts less corners than the production. The quality of recent scores. Also included is the charming *Tissues* for cello, percussion and piano, featuring the composer himself on the ivories.

Helmut Lachenmann
Gran Torso/Salut Für Caudwell
Col Legno CD
Gran Torso for string quartet (1972) and *Salut Für Caudwell* for guitar duo (1977) were breakthrough pieces for Lachenmann. Even the title *Gran Torso* resonates with echoes of Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge*, a work that, in the 1820s, was considered unplayable. In place of the formality of Beethoven's fugue, Lachenmann's torso deals with material that fragments and disperses even as it evolves. From hushed sonorities, minute differentiations of fingerings and bowings drive the music towards hardcore Noise – but there are also moments where the action freezes, leaving the quartet spinning in a busy, uneasy stasis. The Berner Quartet frankly acknowledge the vulnerable place Lachenmann's demands takes them to. Guitarists Wilhelm Bruck and Theodor Ross deliver an abandoned *Salut Für Caudwell*, authentic to his intentions.

Giacomo Manzoni
Self-Portrait
Stradivarius/Ricordi CD
The most immediately striking work here is *Dieci Versi Di Emily Dickinson* (1958) for soprano, two harps and strings. Manzoni encases powerfully centred melodic lines for the soprano voice – complete with a piercing climactic high note – inside a cloud of string glissandi that send harmonic fundamentals scattering. Manzoni has found an exacting musical parallel for Dickinson's imagery, including her habit of breaking up language with expressive dashes and line breaks. Elsewhere, *Percorso GG* (1979) for clarinet and tape layers real-time multiphonics against transformed clarinet sounds on tape. The only dud item is an instrumental extract from a *Doktor Faustus* based opera that sounds inconsequential out of context.

Helmut Lachenmann

Olivier Messiaen
Fête Des Belles Eaux
ATMA CD
You can see why Messiaen was none too keen on having *Fête Des Belles Eaux*, his 1937 composition for ondes Martenot sextet, performed again during his lifetime. It's not terrible, but compered to the masterworks Messiaen wrote around it – *Poèmes Pour Mi* and *O Sacrum Convivium*, for instance – it's emotionally lightweight. But for those interested in Messiaen's journey, this performance by The Ensemble D'Ondes De Montréal is welcome. The ondes Martenot would become an integral part of Messiaen's timbral arsenal, and a key theme in *Fête* anticipates *Turangalila-Symphonie*'s love theme, and the humming, seamless textures characteristic of the ondes Martenot dovetail well with Messiaen's floating, resolution-resistant harmonies.

Per Nørgård
Seadrift
Da Capo CD
In 1975 Danish composer Per Nørgård completed his *Symphony No 3*, in which he re-integrated tonal harmony into music governed by his "infinity series" technique, a self-invented system that treats musical material like fractal geometry. The discovery that the two strains could co-exist powered Nørgård through the next few years – the three works documented here are all satellites of that symphony. *Nova Genitura* for soprano and ensemble (1975) begins with a vocal flourish that might have been lifted from a silky Burt Bacharach record, but Nørgård's opulent lyricism soon takes unforeseen sidesteps as his infinity series deals up unlikely overlaps of line and harmony. This piece and *Seadrift* (1978) itself – a setting of Walt Whitman's poem – are scored for hybrid ensembles of modern strings and Early Music instruments like the recorder, crumhorn and harpsichord – this extraordinarily imagined music leaves our earthly time behind.

Paul Whitty
Thirty-Nine Pages
Meister CD
This music poses as many questions as it answers. British composer Paul Whitty has, as he explains, "re-read, re-organised, re-categorised, re-distributed and re-sounded" each page of the *Violin Sonata In A Major* by 19th century Belgian composer César Franck. Franck's goal-driven rhetoric has been atomised, and what's left is a skeleton of inchoate melodic fragments knocked out of alignment, and once-familiar harmonic patterns and scalar figures that are left to roam through a suddenly alienated soundscape. Untreated Franck occasionally meanders by, and violinist Darragh Morgan and pianist Mary Dullea's emotionally flat, rigidly objective playing heightens the existential atmosphere. Whitty is playing games with our memories – both our assumptions about what we think 19th century music might sound like, and about how his music restructures the debris. But why he should choose Franck – a "one hit wonder" composer – is anyone's guess.

Jörg Widmann
String Quartets
MDG CD
Elena Mendoza
Nebelsplitter
Kairos CD
Confirmation in abundance of Helmut Lachenmann's Coltrane-like hold on the Central European New Music scene – both as a source of ideas and basic sounds – on these two CDs by German composer Jorg Widmann and Spanish composer Elena Mendoza, both born in 1973. Widmann's scores are perfectly plausible on their own terms. Like Lachenmann, Widmann is interested in commenting on where we stand now in relation to classical tradition, and in these string quartets classical and Romantic contours fragment into oblique textures and extended technique noises. Lachenmann wrestles it out through an elevated musical argument, but Widmann drops self-aware quotes and near pastiche into the flow. When, in his *Hunting Quartet*, Widmann asks the musicians to play violin reels associated with evocations of hunting while yelling *"Ja!"* – that was when I lost patience.

Elena Mendoza's pieces seem happy to occupy Lachenmann's soundworld as an academic exercise. *Contra-diccion* (2001) for two violas and *Nebelsplitter* (2008) for piano, violin, viola and cello are culled from the sorts of sounds Lachenmann provoked in *Gran Torso* (reviewed above), and the textural rustling and motor rhythms of her solo guitar *Breviario De Espejismos* (2005) are also deeply indebted. To continue the Coltrane analogy: it's depressing to hear what was once the future reduced to an index of effects that guarantee a modern sound. □

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Keith Moliné

Roots manoeuvres–Kevin Blechdom

Kevin Blechdom
Gentlemania
Sonig CD
We've wised up to Kristin Erickson (aka Kevin Blechdom) now – the diversity of her output the fact that you never know whet you re going to get from her. And *Gentlemania* is strenge indeed; after her avant bluegrass banjo summit with Eugene Chadbourne last year, she's moved on to Broadway show tunes. Erickson's approach on these songs recalls Beby Dee s *Safe Inside The Day*: seemingly honest lyrical autobiography married to incongruously jaunty, gaudy instrumentation. There s little action on the sonic front, with Blechdom completely eschewing electronic instrumentation and processing. *"Stop trying to re invent the wheel/And start telling me how you feel,"* she croons (to herself, perhaps?) on "It s All Been Done Before", which serves as a neat summation of what – I th nk – she s trying to do here. But the real interest lies in the odd fissures and dislocations in these seemingly super-conventional songs undercutting their cuteness and adding a dimension of intriguingly bitter erchness.

John Hudak
Miss Dove, Mr Dove
Afe CD
Hudak s methodology is to distil natural sounds into musicel soundscapes and he tends to operate at the quietest ends of the audio spectrum. *Miss Dove Mr Dove* is no exception he recorded and processed the sound of doves cooing in the resonant spece between two buildings – he also recorded traffic and conversation from passers by, though there s scant evidence of that on the finished work. It sounds like he's allowing the birdcalls to trigger pieno and flute sounds, thus ironing out their microtonal detail and teasing out the melodic content of birdsong. The end result is a charming, if rather inconsequential work. In his favouring of lighter sounds and his unwillingness to cloak his methods in forbidding theory, Hudak comes across as the anti-Francisco Lopez, despite the similarity of their processes. It s diametrically opposed, in sound terms et least, to Merzbow s take on birdsong below. Who could imagine that two works teking their cue very obviously from Messiaen's *Catalogue D Oiseaux* could proceed along such utterly different lines?

Yoshio Mechida
Steelpan Improvisations, 2001–2008
Amorfon CD
Machida has wide-ranging interests from generative music through collage and field recording. His three volume *Hypernatural* series (1999–2008) showcased his gift for producing spacious evocative works. Alongside his interest in programming, he developed over the same period an idiosyncratic sideline as a steel pan performer, though don't expect any jolly renditions of "Yellow Bird" here. Machida treats his instrument like e miniature gamelen, drawing out overtones by patiently working away at melodic figures, producing dreamlika, mesmerising improvisations. What makes the album a real winner is the arc it describes in his development as an improvisor: the early pieces are acoustic and percussive; the middle stretch sees him incorporating laptop processing (Max/MSP, naturally) to produce more amorphous work, and the most recent tracks see him returning to a simpler set-up but managing to invoke some of the textural ideas that he had hitherto explored via electronics. A collection of deft, unassuming and very attractive performances.

Merzbow
Somei
Low Impedance CD
13 Japanese Birds Volume 2 Fukurou
Important CD
Jliat
Untitled
No label CD-R
Masemi Akita continues his recent rediscovery of the drum kit on his two latest releases, but though superior to last year's similarly percussive *Anicca*, neither of these albums is fully convincing. Part of the appeal of Akita's work is that he manages to find something new to say within the narrow parameters of Noise; by pursuing this new path it feels almost as if he s admitting that his inspiration hes run dry. A sheme es much of his work over the last five years or so has been superb. Another problem with this epproach is that it casts the Noise element on top of the drums very much as 'music' es if this is an electronic analogue of a free jazz tronpe in full flight. Akita seems to be telling us that it s only music. In this instance, that doesn't feel like it's enough.

Speaking of conceptualists, James Whitehead (Jl-at) finds himself in the unfortunate position of having pulled one too many japes in the past to be taken seriously (or rather 23 too many – note the 24 volume series *Now That's What I Call Noise*). This latest CD-R is a response to Merzbow's work: an hour-long taster for an ongoing project which, according to Whitehead, could potentially result in 35 000 years of recorded Noise. But if Jliat is a satirist his problem here is that his work is identical to the target of his satire. What it sounds like is a fair-to-middling Merzbow album from ten years ago. In other words, it's pretty darned good, but I suspect that getting the thumbs up from me might undercut the loftier goals Whitehead has in mind.

Andrea Polli
Sonic Antarctica
Gruenrekorder CD
In its time Andrea Polli s *Sonic Antarctica* has taken the form of e live performence, en installation and a radio broadcast. On CD it becomes a documentary-cum meditation on the Antarctic environment, with a particular focns on the scientists who operate in the region. Poll is fascinated by the philosophicel and practicel challenges they face, and the ways in which the context they work in has been politicised end universalised by the advent of climate chenge. She combines field recordings made in the South Pole and McMurdo Sound with interviews with the scientists and recordings of data from the meteorological equipment they use, subjected to what she calls "sonification and audification". Robbed of its visual accompaniment, however, it all falls somewhat flat. Polli's juxtapositions of sounds and transparent editonalising come across as clumsy and predictable. The opinings of the scientists are interesting enough, but as e purely audio experience, *Sonic Antarctica* warrents no more then one or two listens.
Nick Cain

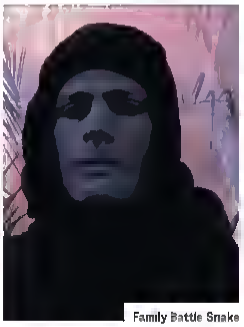
Philip Samartzis & Michael Vorfeld
Scheckenrock
Nonvisualobjects CD
Scheckenrock is a brilliantly realised document of a live performance by the Australian laptopper Samartzis and German percussionist Vorfeld in March 2007. Though improv snobs might turn their noses up at their approach, it is the to-end-fro interplay that captivates here: each responding to the other s interventions as if they're engaged in a game of chess. Vorfeld s fabulously eerie bowed string workout midway throngh "Krause" is slowly encroached on by low-end pulsations from Samartzis s electronics, to which the former replies with a series of string creaks and groans that sound curiously electronic in nature. Samartzis s glistening, finely moduleted sprays of static end white noise then seem to swathe the ection in fine mist. There's great skill on display here, as somehow the pair conjure perfectly opposite gestures without resorting to sonic mimcry or simple accompaniment.

Tamaru
Figure
Trumn CD
Temeru is e Tokyo based improvisor who limits himself to bass guitar, volume pedal and delay in order to explore drone overtones. There's nothing new about his processes, but the stillness of the eight tracks is curiously gripping – Temaru s ability to do nothing for long stretches borders on the catatonic. The opening track "Torso" consists of a single note hammered for a few seconds followed by its decay being fed into a delay system that freezes its undulating resonances. The comparatively action-packed "Juju" introduces slightly bolder growing textures that sound like they might be produced by bowing, though this would seem to be et odds with Tamaru's insistence on restricting himself to the simplest instrumental gestures. He's clearly enthralled by the way the textnres slip and elide, as if his own contribution to the music that emerges is co-incidental. Weirdly, it's the total lack of technique on display that makes *Figure* such a riveting album.

Giancarlo Toniutti
Lo Mutazione
Klanggalerie CD
Originally released in 1985 on the Broken Flag label, who also released the earliest work of Toniutti s compatriot Maurizio Bianchi, *La Mutazione*'s reputation as a seminal slab of electroacoustic experimentation has continued to grow even as Toniutti's release schednle has dwindled to a slow trickle – collaborative efforts with the likes of Conrad Schnitzler and Andrew Chalk notwithstanding. The main characteristic of *La Mutazione* is its density end detail. Toniutti revisited the original composition end began to overlay it with new found souhds, radio sources, field recordings and the like. Remarkably, considering both the fairly primitive equipment used and the fact that nothing of the originel composition was erased as more sonic information was added, the album never feels over-egged. Toniutti has a reputation for being a rigorous theorist, and while the notes that accompany this reissue are pretty indigestible, I suspect that it's his clarity of purpose that prevents the album from lapsing into the sloppy/soppy doom-mongering that beset the work of many of his peers in the 1980s Industrial underground. □

Size Matters

Reviewed by **Byron Coley**



Family Battle Snake

Bipolar Bear/Telbot Tagora
Abstract Distractions split
elFactory 10"

LA's Bipolar Bear (a kinda post-post-core supergroup) and Seattle's Talbot Tagora have some of the same tendencies to lean deep into their riffs. There's a cool messiness to the way they handle these moves, but I keep feeling as though Bipolar Bear are way too reliant on the set form of what they're doing. They just aren't wild enough. Telbot Tagora have a looser grip, and consequently score some of the same points as late 1980s SF noise bums. Which are good points, indeed.

Birds Of Delay/Family Battle Snake
Split
Tome 7"

UK's Birds Of Delay continue to impress with duo electronics that seem headed into some of the same Kosmische realms as those recently visited by Emeralds. Family Battle Snake is the Berlin based solo project for Greek expatriate Bill Koulgas, and is far noisier. Some of the same basics start things off, then it sounds like Eugene Chadbourne has burst into the studio, dragging around a garbage can, with various small animals inside who all have instruments at the ready. Pretty hep.

Cave
The Ride/Bobby's Hash
Static Caravan 7"

Another groove-out by this Chicago group, operating in something of a scrambled free festival-style instrumental fog on the A side. On the flip they're joined by Bobby Conn, who I usually hate, but who actually warbles passably in this context.

Death Sentence. Panda!/The Dreams
Split
Bibimbap 10"

Paul Costuros's new group (DS-PI) gets paired with Strasbourg France's Dreams for an assaultive battle of content. DS-PI create an epic tune with lots of jagged parts and lovely gal vox squawking. The Dreams do their thing with electronics raggedy percussion lumps, African guitar and pennies for your eyes. It's a nicer combination than you might imagine.

Drunkdriver
Knifeday
Fan Death 7"

Brooklyn punk unit Drunkdriver's new single is as relentless a throb as anything in recent memory. Reminiscent of nothing so much as *My War*-era Black Flag, sped up to 78, with a shitfaced John Petkovic replacing Rollins on vocals, all lathe-cut onto raw leather. Fleshy.

Dum Dum Girls
Lang Hair + 2
Horizontal Action 7"

Solo bedroom project by a Los Angeles librarian (or so I've read), this is a cool blend of fuzz and echo with equal traces of Spector and Guitar Wolf. Cunning!

Max Elliot
The Nature O' Nature
Sacred Bones 7"

Solo effort by Wisconsin based guy who usually runs with Absinthe Minds. One slightly rasped voice, one hard charging acoustic guitar and a bunch of words. Not sure why, but it reminds me a bit of some of the things recorded by individual members of the ESP Godz in the days after that group was sundered.

Frank Fairfield
I've Always Been a Rambler/Darling Corey
Tompkins Square 7"

Fairfield is a Los Angeles based musician who plays traditional material on stringed instruments with a deep rural vibe. I don't have much of an idea what his actual story is, but he really nails a kind of deep holler logic.

Flying
Draw It In The Dark
Menlo Park 7" + DVD

Three tracks (mostly drawn from their CD) by this Brooklyn combo, plus a bonus DVD with fan videos. They have a cheery post-everyth ng approach to kitchen pop construction that can be engaging, even if it feels a bit more selfconscious than one might hope. If the videos make the group's 'art project' aura a little more specific, they also makes their brunt more appealing and less faux naif.

In be tween noise
Ecstasy Showered Its Petals With The Full Peal Of Bells
Ferns 3" CD

Steve Roden
A Slow Moving Boat
New Plastic Music 3" CD

The first of these is a solo sound piece by Los Angeles based multimedia artist Steve Roden, using his primary musical soubriquet. The source is entirely comprised of a single smell bell, but the processed results are a rich, layered river flecked with jangle and clack, rolling towards the horizon like bubbling snakeskin. The second disc is more complex, involving a recording Roden made of himself humming along with the engine noise of a Norwegian ferry. He then erased the ferry's sounds and replaced them with a bowed banjo drone. It's an extremely human piece, more closely related to the leftfield efforts of psych/folk practitioners than any other Roden material I've heard.

Night Bear
Night Bear
Night Bear 3" CD

As near as I can figure, this is the sole release by a now-defunct California trio. In their time, they created a good group of songs, exploring some of the same textual planes as the various Palace-related crews. Night Bear's dreams feel a little more majesty-oriented, however, and it's easy to imagine a lot of people would enjoy this if they could figure out how to hear it.

Northampton Weals
Valley Of Shame
Open Mouth MC

Bill Nace and Thurston Moore throw down a wall of guitar racket, making it sound as though there are more then four hands involved in the creation of ear-rending squee. But it's just those four hands. Ouch! Hurts. Feels good.

Onna
Onna
Moly Mountain 7"

Exact reissue of this oddball 1983 single originally issued by Japan's Cupid & Psyche label. It's a whipped combination of static beat, psychedelic swirl and child-like female vocals. And is the supposed herbinger for a restrospective compilation of material by Keizo Miyanishi, which should be cool. As pleasently perplexing as it sounded 26 years ago.

Quincy Quertz
Brightness Studies
Dreamhouse Art MC

Facts are a bit scarce on the ground, but this seems to be the solo work of a Vancouver, Washington guy called Tracey Trence. The vibe is hippie-ish and the work is based around keyboard stuff that's neither too far out nor too noisy. If anything, it reminds me of the mid-1970s (post-Temam Shud) records by Lindsey Blue, but with far less classical ges.

Aran Ruth
Silver Wings/Cast Your Ship Upon Rain
Beehive Recording Co 7"

Former member of Detroit revo-glam stompers The Sirens, has been reborn as a droney electro-folk songstress. This single pairs acoustic guitar with effects very well, creating a trippy tribute to predecessors like Linda Perhacs and Ruthenn Friedmann in the process. Extremely stylin.

Silentist
The Tunnel
Znm 7"

Begun as a solo project by Portland, Oregon's Mark Burden, Silentist has evolved into a very strange trio combining noise, Metal and classical influences into a wild sluice. This single has outtakes from their last album and sounds like some unholy alliance between Lubomyr Melnyk and Mick Harris. Yikes!

Solar Fire Trio
Hand To Mouth
Sky Fi MC

Liverpool studio session from October 2006 by this always interesting tenor/alto/drums trio. The four pieces here are nicely recorded and put Steve Belger's drums pretty far up in the mix, which sounds great. On the longer opening track, the horns do a lot of nice freak register tangling. On the shorter ones they tend more towards melodicism and wrap around each other like thick braids of smoke. First tendency is to say it's good but nothing special, but then I start to recall how few solid free blowing trio sessions one hears these days. And esteem rises like a cloud of flies.

Spiral Joy Bend
Black Earth Hymns
Eatyerk MC

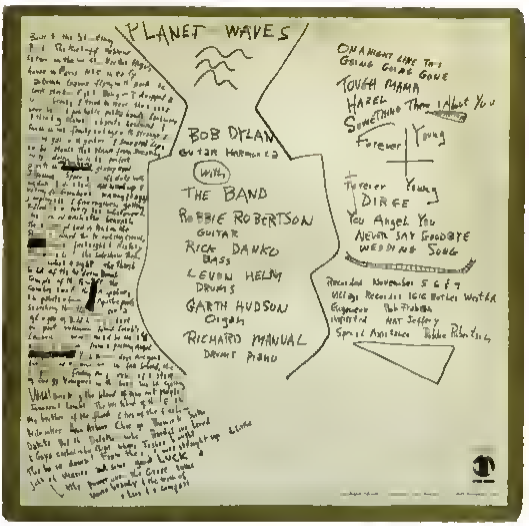
Stripped down and relocated, the Spiral Joy Band on this tape is a duo of Patrick Best and Mikel Dimmick (both also known for their roles in the group Pelt). *Black Earth Hymns* comprises two sidelong tracks, recorded at a local radio station, and the pieces here are active, loud drone works that use harmonium, gong, bowls and bells to create a great spectre of cloud-sound, slowly forming a halo around the world.

Various
I/D/V01
Unframed 7"
I/D/V02
Unframed 7"

This is a paired set of artist's records, extremely impressive in terms of both concept and realisation. The first offers six sound artists using turntables as sources, each creating a single one minute piece and two closed grooves. The participants are Lary 7, Joe Colley, Busratch, Toshio Kajiwara, Tommy Birchett and Disb13. The pieces range from antic (Kajiwara) to subliminal (Colley) and the locked grooves are cokey-ing. The second 7" has sounds created in the same format, but using guitar as the source. Artists here are Ian Epps, Kenta Nagai, Annette Krebs, Chris Forsyth, Giuseppe Ielasi and Koen Holtkamp. Sonically, this work goes from Heldon-esque (Epps) to chimingly folky (Hotkamp). But it's all very good. The covers are beautifully crafted as well, making it a thoroughly thoughtful and satisfying project on all levels. □

The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by Alex Neilson



Bob Dylan
Planet Waves
Asylum/Island 1974
Artwork by Bob Dylan

Looking back do you ever get the feeling that your puny life can be readily compartmentalised into a series of depressing episodes that have been triggered by one identifiable faith-shattering moment that has forced you to re-evaluate and systematically renounce everything you once held certain? Yes? Phew!

For me, these processes of skin shedding have always been soundtracked by one inner-landscape-mapping album or other. Whether as a pluke farming teenager sifting through the compulsory dreck of thriftstore shellac in a Leeds charity shop and happen-ng upon a blue label Topic LP called *Sea Songs And Sea Shanties*. Or having the goalposts of my dope-addled pud exploded into a thousand splinters and wanting to quit music after hearing Albert Ayler's *Live At Greenwich Village*. Or finding consolation 'neath the sky-wide canopies of Frank Sinatra's devastating vocal sweeps on *Sinatra Sings For Only The Lonely* (after an ex-girlfriend transformed my big pink heart into a pulsating black acorn). But it was Bob Dylan who indicated a way to compact these superficially disparate enthusiasms. Dylan seemed to use an image or melody from an old folk song as a kernel of inspiration to extrapolate his own much more personal creations. He also combines the kind of singing-into-the-pit emotional acumen that I would understand by listening to the Ayler group with the sublime tenderness of Sinatra.

One Dylan album that I would like to offer up as an underrated masterpiece is *Planet Waves*. Immediately remarkable about this album is that it was only the second (of 14, by 1974) not to use a photograph of the protagonist as the central cover image. Instead we have a strange ink drawing by Dylan himself, which resembles a sailor's tattoo as designed by German expressionist painter Ernst-Ludwig Kirchner. This is accompanied by the Guthrie-esque phrase "Cast-iron songs and torch ballads", which I am to understand is how Dylan himself perceived the album. However it is the sleevenotes on the back cover which I'm most interested in: how they relate to the content of the album and why this is an important album in Dylan's oeuvre.

The back cover displays a playful, poetic rap (also penned by Dylan) complete with several crossings out. Here we have a portal to the actual machinations of his creativity and this encapsulates a spirit of spontaneous creation that pervades the whole album.

This is further exemplified by the inclusion of two versions of the same song, "Forever Young". That the renditions are so startlingly different is testament to the artist's insatiable sense of conception, as wholly new meanings are teased from the raw material of the song (you can almost hear Dylan mumbling after the first successful take, "OK, now let's try it like this..." as on the genuine *Basement Tapes*).

Further cross referencing of the back cover text with the songs intimates that this is above all a transitional Dylan album. An intermediary between the announcements-from-the-mountain style of yore ("Gates Of Eden", "Hard Rain", "It's Alright Ma") and the raw hearted vulnerability of what was to come ("You're A Big Girl Now". "Sara". "Is Your Love In Vain?"). There are many indications toward re-igniting the old enthusiasms of boyhood as the landscapes of Minnesota are invoked – benevolent spectres in whose presence the artist's heart first opened. Such as in the song "Something There Is About You" with the lines, *"Thought I'd shaken the wonder and the phantoms of my youth/Rainy days on the Great Lakes walking the hills of old Duluth"*. On the back cover text Dylan recasts these benign regions as quasi-biblical domains, with himself reborn as some wandering Lot of the Midwest. "Cities of the flesh – Milwaukee, Ann Arbor, Chicago, Bismarck, South Dakota, Duluth! Duluth – where Baudelaire lived and Goya cashed his chips, where Joshua brought the house down!" While illuminating fragments of the past Dylan is cautious of not allowing it to possess him fully and let the future slip past unattended (the text begins with the phrase "Back to the starting point!", and the album ends with the line *"now that the past is gone"*): as the group look towards the first Bob Dylan tour for eight years. ☐

Alex Neilson is a Glasgow based percussionist and singer. His group Trembling Bells' *Corbeth* is out now on Honest Jons.
www.myspace.com/tramblingbells

Print Run

New music books: devoured and dissected

Staying alive: Black Sabbath 1970

This Ain't The Summer Of Love. Conflict And Crossover In Heavy Metal And Punk

Steve Waksman

University Of California Press PBK £14.95

When US academic Steve Waksman begins his analysis of the ongoing tussle between punk and Heavy Metal not with The Stooges or Black Sabbath – although they certainly figure later on – but with now forgotten heavy rockers Grand Funk Railroad, it's clear that *This Ain't The Summer Of Love* hardly constitutes another faithful restatement of rock orthodoxy. That he manages to convince the reader of that group's pivotal role in this exchange is testament to his ingenuity and familiarity with the source material. With this volume, Waksman perceives the commonalities and disparities between two seemingly opposed movements as matters of aesthetic value judgment generated largely by fans, identifying "a fluid set of meanings and values around which the two genres have assumed definition in themselves and in relation to each other". These meanings and values are neatly illustrated by the battle between Metalheads and punks which took place on the letters page of *Creem* magazine in the late 197Ds, discussed at length in Waksman's introduction. Sample quote from the pro-punk camp: "For someone who thinks himself so sexy and 'macho' and masculine, [David Lee Roth] is about the queerest-geyest thing I've ever seen."

While any text on which Iggy Pop, The Dictators' Handsome Dick Manitoba, Joan Jett, Alice Cooper and Lemmy feature heavily is unlikely to be short on entertainment value, Waksman's enthusiasm and curiosity – barely restrained within his rigorous academic approach – ensure that his book communicates rather than merely instructs. He displays an unfaltering grasp not only of what makes Alice, Iggy and Sabbath and later Black Flag, Metallica and The Melvins important, but also what makes their music truly *great*. His elucidation, for example, of the increasingly unorthodox approach to playing guitar adopted by Black Flag's Greg Ginn in the early 1980s is flawlessly accurate: "... On *Damaged*, Ginn developed his own brand of antivirtuosity... a form of calculated imprecision full of apparently 'wrong' notes and assaultive blasts of feedback." Waksman's research also throws up moments of priceless humour. In a section concerning the attitude of the late 70s UK music press to Metal, the author quotes an exasperated Paul Morley, from an *NME* review of Judas Priest's 1978 opus *Stained Class*: "Heavy Metal is as stone shingly and a little embarrassingly – God, it just won't lie down – very much alive."

There are omissions. Waksman's analysis ends with Grunge, thereby leaving contemporary manifestations of cross-breeding between Metal and punk/hardcore – the critically reviled yet commercially successful hybrid that is Metalcore springs to mind – unexplored. Also, aside from a couple of cursory mentions of highly influential crossover outfit Discharge, the largely European phenomenon of crust punk isn't touched upon, neither therefore is its bastard progeny, the warpspeed mutation of Grindcore – the formation and influence of Amebix, Napalm Death, Godflesh and Siege would surely have merited an additional chapter.

This Ain't The Summer Of Love is undoubtedly US-centric in its outlook: the most in-depth discussion of a UK phenomenon concerns the New Wave of British Heavy Metal, a late 70s/early 80s movement originally tonted by certain quarters of the UK music press but endlessly romanticised by the hugely successful and conspicuously American Metal group Metallica.

This is not to detract from Waksman's achievement, however. The author is to be commended for shedding welcome light on a seldom illuminated dialogue and recognising the ongoing variegation of rock 'n' roll as a process contingent on the external pressures brought to bear on it – most notably by its fans.

Joseph Stannard

I Got Two Wings: Incidents And Anecdotes Of The Two-Winger Preacher And Electric Guitar Evangelist Elder Utah Smith

Lynn Abbott

Cassquarter PBK + CD $19.95

According to his family, in the early 194Ds the Reverend Elder Utah Smith was "the first black man ever to have an electric guitar", and he used it to play revivalist meetings all over the US, his lustrous vocals delivered as he sprinted down church aisles, hollering and unfolding complex guitar improvisations. Smith spent time in New York, before settling in New Orleans during the 1950s, where he named the Two Wings Temple after his signature theme "I Got Two Wings". Smith released only three records during his 40 year career. "Two Wings" was the A side on all three and he wasn't averse to a little hokum – as his devout self aimed to save your soul, Smith's inner showman ran through his congregation, preaching through his guitar, with a pair of homemade angel wings hooked around his shoulders.

I guess the family of Charlie Christian might have something to say about the 'first black man with an electric guitar' theory (not that it really matters), but the American popular music historian Lynn Abbott makes a convincing case for Smith being the forgotten link between traditional gospel music and the emergence of early rock 'n' roll. Smith's constituency was the Church of God in Christ (COGIC), a Pentecostal subsidiary of the Baptist church with a history dating back to 1907. Within that community, Smith enjoyed something like rock star status, but was a shadowy presence otherwise: a man cited by R&B singer Ernie K-Doe as an important influence, and remembered for opening Sister Rosetta Tharpe and Blind Boys Of Alabama gigs: a onetime pioneer who was buried in an unmarked grave in 1965 after his popularity slumped.

We're interested now because Smith's music still has power to transport you to another place: whether you do God or you don't. The CD, filled with Abbott's restorations of Smith's tiny recorded legacy, is revelatory. Although the basic ingredients never change: the six radically different versions of "Two Wings" find Smith keeping his ear to the outside world. On "Two Wings Flying Home", cut under the alias of Brother Bill Louis in the early 1950s, Smith ponders the terrifying possibility of the Bomb, and the distinction between Smith's electricity and the stately acoustic "I Have Good News To Bring" by Sister Rosetta Tharpe (also included on the CD) is equivalent to Pete Seeger's old-worldly charms put against electric Dylan. Smith's message has readied itself for a plugged-in world. Hendrix is just on the horizon.

Smith's proto-R&B riffs anticipate soul music, and those same riffs and the congregation's handclaps are the source of sounds that would feed into Charles Mingus's "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting" and "Better Git It In Your Soul". Had Smith worked to a wider audience, he may have been more celebrated, but it's also possible he might have lost an essential purity. When history's fickle course is righted (that's always a good thing – when the music is as moreish and spiritually nourishing as Smith's, doubly so).

Philip Clark

Great expectations. Alhaji Fabala in Banjul, The Gambia

Samuel Charters (Alhaji Fabala)

A Language Of Song. Journeys In The Musical World Of The African Diaspora
Samuel Charters
Duke University Press PBK £19.99

"My problem in the casual Trenchtown dance halls and in the corner bars with jukeboxes was simple. It was Kool And The Gang." Such is the life of the music researcher. In the mid-1970s, Europe was besotted with the new sound of reggae, but in Jamaica the crowds couldn't get enough of a certain American soul group. "Their song "Ladies Night" was having the same effect as a Caribbean storm. It was washing over everything, and there was no way to get away from it." On a reggae recce for Swedish label Sonet, Samuel Charters has great difficulty hearing any live music, but his excursions into record shops and his eventual encounter with a Buddha-like Augustus Pablo make great reading. He eventually attends a big concert by Black Uhuru and Peter Tosh, and Charters's sensitive examination of the well-heeled Kingston audience and their ambivalent response to this inflammatory music is one of this book's high points.

Charters turns a venerable 80 this year, with a rich and varied career behind him as poet, novelist, record producer (Country Joe And The Fish, Bebo Valdes, various Zydeco artists) and, primarily, as a writer on African diaspora music. His books include the award-winning *The Country Blues* and *The Roots Of The Blues: An African Search*. The present volume falls somewhere between a memoir and a compilation album: over 14 chapters he recounts his trips in search of what lies behind black music, from Alabama skiffle in 1952 to New Year 2005 in Havana. In each location, his vivid descriptions take you out on the streets (he likes to walk) and involve you with live music, whether it's the modest din of a Fulani flute band in Gambia or the ear-pulverising racket of a Bahia carnival in Brazil. Charters's elegant gambit is to switch back and forth from today's music to its historical precedents – those Fulanis are playing pretty much as described in 18th century accounts of West African battle music. Charters quotes a writer from 1701, then shuttles us back to a dirt road in Banjul, where a griot called Alhaji Fabala agrees to perform a song about the first coming of the Europeans. "He sat for a moment, tapping delicately on the balafon. 'The Europeans? It is a hard song to do and goes on for a day and a half. I don't sing it often.'" Charters translates five pages of lyrics from this song, full of names and numbers, and all about slavery.

Of course, the story of slavery underlies almost everything here. Charters visits the Sea Islands in Georgia because of Fanny Kemble's scandalous 1838 collection of letters, *Journal Of A Residence On A Georgia Plantation*. He conducts us through 19th century eyewitness accounts of slaves' music as he travels across the very different contemporary Georgia environment. Not expecting to find any traces of Sea Islands music, he is astonished to hear, in a Baptist church service, a loose, spontaneous form of group singing that clearly has roots in the years of slavery. This is a quietly written book, but Charters's excitement at such moments of epiphany is palpable. Another occurs on Andros Island in the Bahamas. Inside a dark house a sick woman is dying, and the neighbours have gathered to sing hymns. Eventually one John Roberts is asked to sing, and the music shifts from English church to African village. "Their voices were hard, the tone was coarse and intense... the verse took on a new dimension as a complex polyrhythmic chant... It was still possible to follow the harmonies of the simple hymn that were the unchanging foundation of the melodic elaborations, but each of the singers was improvising now. It was as though they were weaving an elusive, continually changing pattern in the amber light."

Charters also has a keen eye for class and racial division, displayed in his account of a Scott Joplin ragtime festival where almost all performers and audience are white. Other episodes deal with Harlem, where gospel church services are a major tourist attraction, Trinidad's calypso and steel pan traditions, and even a trip to the Canary Islands to investigate possible African influence on the 18th century canario dance still played today by guitarists. His book is an absorbing, accessible read, underpinned by solid scholarship and the author's good-humoured and seemingly endless curiosity.
Clive Bell

L'Underground Musical En France
Eric Deshayes & Dominique Grimaud
Le Mot Et Le Reste PBK €23

For readers fluent in French (an English translation in the near future is highly unlikely), Eric Deshayes and Dominique Grimaud's 324 page book is a useful tool for hacking through the undergrowth of post-1968 French alt.music, if not exactly an enjoyable read. It starts off well enough with "Une Histoire Des Maquis Sonores Français", a concise and informative résumé of French pop history from the arrival of Vince Taylor And The Play-Boys in 1961, via the turbulent events of 1968 (whose impact on the wider world is, for once, not overstated) and the emergence of influential publications (notably *Actuel* magazine) and performance networks (the Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture, who welcomed artists as diverse as Magma, Brigitte Fontaine and Frank Wright) to punk, Rock In Opposition and mutant disco. But after the second chapter, "Jazz Désaxé", the book becomes little more than a collection of potted biographies packed with useful information for sure (the indexing is thorough), but dry and dull.

Grimaud and Deshayes run into problems when they break down the pop/rock scene into various categories – "Psychedélique Camambert", "Politique Pop Or Not!", "Anar Rock", "Chante-sons De Traverses" and "'Pataphysique Cantique". Needless to say key figures (Gilbert Artman, Jac Berrocal, Pascal Comelade, Richard Pinhas, etc) pop up all over the place, which can be both confusing and frustrating. Instead of trying to tell the story of each and every disc released by each and every Magma spin-off group (and one questions whether groups like Magma and Urban Sax, influential though they were, qualify as "underground"), they would have been better off choosing fewer musicians and providing more background information, describing the music in more detail (that much overused 'mythic' needs some justification), not to mention livening up proceedings with some salient quotations from the artists themselves.

Excluding French hiphop and Techno is unfortunate (maybe the authors think they're both too mainstream and commercial, but I well recall plenty of underground rave activity in the early 90s), all but ignoring free improvisation is inexcusable, especially since this is a scene that, in terms of financing, networking and community, is authentically underground. But what the book lacks most is a respectable up-to-date discography. Grimaud and Deshayes certainly whet our appetites for a taste of Axolotl, Ariel Kalma and Anne Gillis, to name but a few – it would have been nice to know which (if any) of their recordings are currently available.
Dan Warburton

On Screen

Films & DVDs

High Rise's Munehiro Narita

High Rise
Psychedelic Speed Freaks Live 1986
PSF DVD

This new DVD captures seminal Japanese power trio High Rise in 1986 on electrifying form. Over 25 minutes their Stooges-plus-Hawkwind hoodlum psych is urgent, vital and relentlessly focused.

Guitarist Munehiro Narita is unquestionably the star here. Asahito Nanjo (on bass and delay-heavy vocals) and Yuro Ujue (drums) feel like mere stagehands to Narita's astonishing performance. His solos are a masterclass in psych guitar: his blistering technique fuzzed up and deftly coloured by wah-wah. On the first High Rise album (*Psychedelic Speed Freaks*), Narita was credited with "motorcycle fuzztone" – this only half-captures the essence of his sound, which lies somewhere between a Harley's roar and the unholy shriek of the banshee.

As the set progresses, Narita's guitar mutates. While the solos on the earlier songs, for all their explosive energy, have the blues at their core, by the end of the set Narita has all but left the blues behind in favour of a freer style that makes use of discordant Keiji Haino-like suspensions and noisy fingernail scrabbling. He seems to undergo a physical transformation too. Static at first, though with a look of deadly intent, Narita's behaviour gets wilder as he gets sucked, like HP Lovecraft's Erich Zenn, into the eddying vortex of his own playing. His body spasms and jackknifes, cradling his precious guitar in a wiry whirl of elbows. Extraordinary to watch.

Strictly speaking, the visual quality of this footage is poor. Camera movement is jerky, cracks on the lens show up whenever the light strikes them, and a heavy grey fug, which might be lens grime or dry ice, hangs over the group. But this just adds to the film's appeal. In the same way that the corrosion on the famous Les Rallizes Dénudés tapes from the 1970s enhances their mythic aura. The sound quality is also surprisingly good, with a pronounced top end that gives the trio the bite they can lack on record.

Nick Richardson

Mystic savage: Henri Pousseur

Henri Pousseur: Hommage Au Sauvage
Dir Dominique Lohlé & Guy-Marc Hinant
2005, 52 mins
Sub Rosa DVD

How do abstract sounds conjure up emotions and ideas? How can splashes of paint create representations of three-dimensional reality? How does a man in a car, speaking quietly, reflectively, reacting to the hours of the day and the changing light outside, compress a whole life and philosophy into less than an hour? In the last case, only by artful and seemingly artless, film making.

In *Hommage Au Sauvage*, Lohlé and Hinant recast the music documentary as road movie. Its subject is the Belgian modernist composer Henri Pousseur, once routinely mentioned alongside Stockhausen and Boulez as one of the pillars of the Darmstadt school, in later years strangely eclipsed in reputation. For every New Music listener who could identify *Gruppen* or *Pli Selon Pli* from a random sample, there are probably a dozen, in the UK and US at least, who have never heard *Couleurs Croisées* or *Votre Faust* at all.

Hommage Au Sauvage suggests that the oversight is unfortunate, and offers a reason for it. Pousseur was not easily packaged or niched. He could draw equally on Schubert and Webern in *Votre Faust*. He was far more intensely mystical in person than the reassuringly earthy Messiaen, a far bolder syncretist than Stockhausen, as interested in popular music as he was in classical, in poetry as much as music. His life was a journey in the most straightforward sense, and Lohle and Hinant's film is a microcosm of that.

In it, Pousseur travels from his home city Liège to Basel, where the Paul Sacher Foundation has acquired his vast archive. As the changing light plays across his face, he talks, and the landscapes of his life, from the flat plains of Belgium to the peak of Mount Fuji, are conjured up out of nothing more than photons and phonemes. If the composer presents a quietly charismatic persona – not much obvious wildness – the film is the result of modestly virtuosic direction.

In the spring of 1991, Pousseur told me that his aim was to open our ears "to all sounds of history", allowing us to explore "all the known and unknown regions of our hearable world, from Mozart to the noise of automated industry, from samba to the amplified vibration of molecules". His goal: joyful comprehension, as a means to living, vital peace. His death in March 2009 came just before his 80th birthday, and just before a small explosion of reassessment and almost guilty revival of interest. An ironic twist, but he lives in this short film.

Brian Morton

Musically Mad
Dir Karl Folke 2008, 60 mins
No label DVD

The early 1980s on a council estate in Wandsworth, South London, and Jah Life sound system are setting up on a communal lawn. Such public spaces don't permit ball games, but it doesn't say anything about holding a dance there, so homemade speaker boxes and amps are scattered across the grass, a sound man is stripping a wire with his bare teeth before plugging it into the stack, and The Sound Dimension's "Psychedelic Rock" booms around the courtyard as the mic man struggles to contain the feedback.

It's not just bass weight that's remarkable about reggae sound systems – it's that that mysterious subsonic presence is conjured from electrical odds and ends, and speakers physically built from the ground up. Most of *Musically Mad*, Karl Folke's affectionate documentary on UK sound systems, is taken up with interviews with veterans still plying their trade, such as Channel One and Iration Steppers. Yet discussion is constantly turning back to this perceived golden era. As the interviewees relate, UK sound systems are more in demand than ever abroad, but uptight venue owners have made it progressively harder for such crews, once pillars of the black community, to get into clubs back home – stricter noise levels and the UK smoking ban can hardly have helped, either.

Despite a detailed booklet essay by Dave Katz, as a history *Musically Mad* is lacking a little shape, and there's no voiceover to provide context. There's sadly no interview with Jah Shaka, who was instrumental in forging the distinctively British 'steppers' style from the early 80s onwards. The archive footage partially makes up for these flaws – early 80s dances in Wandsworth and Manchester's Moss Side with Squiggly and Yetta or Baron Turbo (whoever the hell they were) feature brutally beefed-up Studio One rhythms and freaky free-associating toasting. In more recent scenes, dancers skank away in private revere in darkened rooms, a selector playing militant dubplates off a single deck perched on a foam cushion to soak up the bass.

UK sound systems these days tend towards tough, minimalist steppers rhythms, and there's a certain sense of aesthetic retrenchment compared to the fertile impurity of dancehall. The documentary has a constant undercurrent of a once strong tradition now on the wane, with Joe Ariwa and Young Warrior, the sons of Mad Professor and Jah Shaka, complaining of few other young producers coming up. For all the positive vibes and fearsomely contagious bass, *Musically Mad* ends up as something of a eulogy.

Derek Walmsley

Holiday in Cambodia: Dengue Fever

Dengue Fever
Sleepwalking Through The Mekong
MIG/Sanctuary DVD

Like salmon or swallows or tortoises returning great distances to spawn, Southern California's Dengue Fever seemed driven almost by biological imperative on their 2005 tour of Cambodia. The lost music of that country's pop culture, extinguished by Pol Pot's regime along with many of its creators, is central to the group's repertoire. Dengue Fever sprang from brothers Ethan and Zac Holtzman's shared love for Cambodian singles recorded in the 1960s by the likes of Sin Sisamouth and Ros Serey Sothea. Finding likeminded souls to recreate the mod sounds of a foreign culture was a neat trick in itself – finding the perfect vocalist in the form of expatriate Khmer popstar Chhom Nimol, at the time singing in a restaurant in Long Beach's 'Little Phnom Penh' neighbourhood, was nothing short of a godsend.

The group's history is revealed piecemeal in the course of *Sleepwalking Through The Mekong*, a documentary that tracks their pilgrimage. Early in the film, each musician in turn recounts Dengue Fever's genesis, and the group's complete lack of expectations for the tour, via a confessional format familiar to viewers of reality television. These brief episodes are interspersed within many truly extraordinary sequences: the group's first appearance on Cambodian national television, where their set is abetted by comedians and a bevy of vocalists with eloquent body language impromptu collaborations with Khmer master musicians; guitarist Zac Holtzman busking on a crowded street at night, delighting the crowd with songs sung (unexpectedly) from a foreigner) in their own language. Director John Pirozzi deploys the myriad otherworldly aspects of Cambodian life – noteworthy among these, unnerving traffic and a race between canoes of epic length during the annual water festival – as the backdrop, gorgeously photographed, to several performances by the group. Much has been made of the components of Dengue Fever's sound – guitar technique and timbres culled from both the psychedelic years and an earlier era of surf. Instrumentals, keyboard textures adapted from Ethiopian pop – but to Cambodian listeners, they represent a happier past regained. They go down a storm, needless to add.

The documentary *Tokyo-Ga* followed film maker Wim Wenders as he tried to find traces of the long-ago Tokyo so much a part of the films of Yazujiro Ozu, in the contemporary iteration of that city. A similar quest animates some portion of Dengue Fever's exploits in their singer's native land. Wenders wound up swamped by the irony of factories producing plastic sushi and the racket of pachinko parlours in contemporary Japan – the city of Setsuko Hara and *Tokyo Story* was long gone. Dengue Fever, on the other hand, immerse themselves in a Cambodian landscape that, while impoverished and scarred by past conflict, is crowded with cultural opportunity and joy. Significant in the riot of stimuli encountered by Dengue Fever on their great adventure is the thrum of music as a component of daily life, the latter possibly being the sound of human resiliency.

Richard Henderson

Bunny Lee in *Dub Echoes*

Dub Echoes
Dir Bruno Natal 2009, 75 mins
Soul Jazz DVD

It's a neat twist on the standard talking-heads format. From those present at the birth of Dub Reggae (Lee Perry, Bunny Lee, King Jammy, U-Roy), we see the dub echoes of each topic broached in this episodic documentary spread through the international disseminators (Sly & Robbie, Don Letts, Mad Professor, Dennis Bovell, Aba Shanti I, Adrian Sherwood, Bill Laswell, Lee Perry biographer Steve Katz, Blood & Fire's Steve Barrow) and out to later generations of hiphop, triphop, chill out, Jungle, House and dubstep producers. And while the history covered brings no surprises at all – do we really need to hear once again that Don Letts played reggae when he started DJing at the Roxy because no punk records had yet been made? – the constant rhythms of voices repeating the rhetoric and discussing the techniques and meaning of dub, edited with uncommon sense of flow and some subtle dubwise audiovisual techniques by Brazilian director Bruno Natal, makes for an immersive and occasionally ravishing experience.

Two problems spoil its flow, though. Firstly, presumably because of licensing complexities, there is little original music here – fellow Brazilians Digitaldubs Soundsystem provide the bulk of the soundtrack – so many points pass by without the audio illustration one craves. Secondly, the newer generation of producers seems selected almost at random, so for every engaging, impassioned Roots Manuva, Kode9 or Congo Natty, there is time wasted with garrulous chancers (Howie B, the execrable Audio Bullys) or simply bores (chirpy breakbeat DJ Adam Freeland, the unspeakably bland Thievery Corporation). This feels doubly annoying when there are so many of the dubstep generation who could have spoken – DMZ's Mala is a particularly glaring omission – and unexpectedly insightful young voices that do appear, like Soulwax and Brazilian rapper Black Alien, are unnecessarily sidelined. At almost two hours including extras, it feels like there is a better film that could have been made with some of this fat trimmed. Nonetheless, on the whole the cascade of resonant voices and memorable, eminently sampleable phrase-making here is more than worth forwarding through the dross for.

Joe Muggs

Wilco
Ashes Of American Flags
Nonesuch DVD

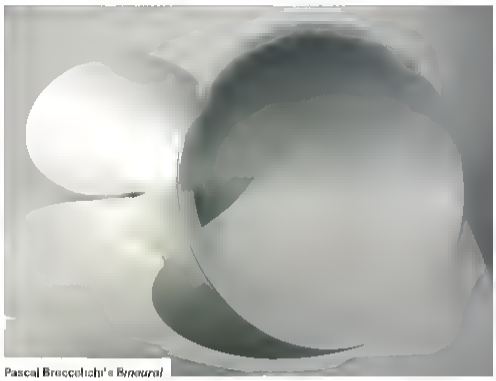
This concert DVD takes in a variety of locations, including Cain's Ballroom in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Tipitina's in New Orleans and The Ryman Auditorium in Nashville. Shot in High Definition and produced and directed by Christoph Green and Brendan Canty of Fugazi, it features not just live footage but interviews and behind the scenes material. Its mood is elegiac but determinedly warm hearted, placing Wilco in their context as part of a popular culture in danger of vanishing, but still hanging defiant. There's a lot of road footage, which converts the generally tedious business of hauling across country in a bus into a sunlit tone poem to the passing American landscape, with its 18 wheelers, silhouetted skyscrapers, flat, infinite plains and remote shacks. It's a testimony to an America that is slipping into a sort of permanent past tense, a country that 'was' rather than 'is', littered with battered remnants of its old ten gallon glories. Nashville itself is the jewel of this ghost America, a museum town, yet still with a faint pulse.

Wilco's own music is a unison of past and present styles, in which Country, Dixieland and rock, both traditional and experimental, meld into a chromium plated whole. These are all-American songs, in which values such as being 'solid' and 'reel' abound, and yet are subject to chill tornado blasts of modernistic noise, a reminder that then was then and now is now. Still, there is a vivid sense of an abiding rock community, for whom live experience and record stores still mean a great deal (the release of this DVD coincided with the national Record Store Day in the US), despite the ravaging toll of downloading and online consumption. Wilco are one of the last great American bands standing.

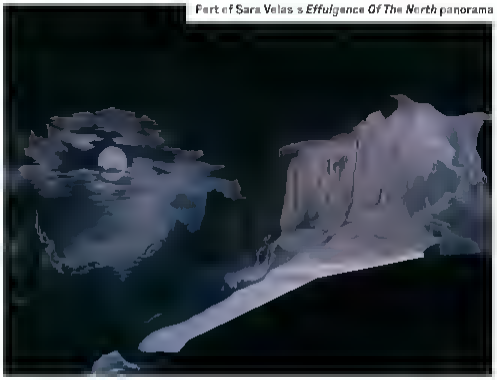
David Stubbs

On Site

Exhibitions, performance art, installations, etc



Pascal Broccolichi's *Binaural*



Part of Sara Velas's *Effulgence Of The North* panorama

Sound By Artists

Galerie Fréderic Giroux, Paris, France

Published in 1990, the anthology *Sound By Artists* remains a landmark in the history of sound art. Spanning all kinds of sound works as well as visual pieces evoking imaginary sounds, it includes Christian Marclay's seminal *Sound Page* – a transparent plastic insert engraved with grooves that conjures up imaginary music in the reader's mind. Conceived as a homage to the anthology, the exhibition *Sound By Artists* focuses specifically on such works. It shows that imagined sounds can be as evocative and absorbing as real ones.

Curated by French sound artist Pascal Broccolichi, the 19 predominantly silent works making up the show employ different techniques to fire the visitor's aural imagination. Dominique Blais's *Les Machines Orphelines* (*The Orphaned Machines*) consists of two ghostly stripped down plastic models of Revox tape recorders that owe their title to the obsolescence of the technology to which they refer. Their empty reels turn silently, calling to mind the myriad sounds produced by the Revox in its heyday. Pierre Laurent Cassière's *Vent Tendu* (*Stretched Wind*) is an anamorphic drawing of a previously realised installation consisting of a cable stretched across the length of a room. This installation consisted of transducers that transmitted sampled wind sounds to the cable, causing it to vibrate. Only when visitors applied their ear to the cable could they hear these sounds of air that had travelled through the cable and not – paradoxically – through air. As visitors in the gallery contemplate the silent drawing on the wall, they too listen out for sounds of wind or air.

In other pieces the reference to sound is oblique and indirect. Jérôme Poret's *The Frozen Estonian Block Metal Forest, Sonicdrawing* is a cartoon-like wall drawing in which a giant black line – a reference to the speed lines used by manga artists to denote movement and emotion – cuts across a white background. It conveys the immediacy of sound and the sheer size of it represents the experience of high volume. In a more contemplative vein, curator Broccolichi's own *Binaural* consists of two silent white cones resembling giant ears. Echoing the theme of the exhibition, they appear to be absorbed by sounds that only they can hear.

Several works do incorporate sound. Pierre Beloüin took the Magritte-like photograph *Blue House* during the course of a residency in Canada. At the same time, he recorded the sounds occurring in the vicinity of the place where he took the photo. He then sent the recordings and picture to two composers, asking each of them to compose a soundtrack for the photograph in his stead. Visitors can listen to these two soundtracks based on medieted realities over headphones in the gallery, while contemplating the photo itself.

Arnaud Meguet's *Experimental Music Fans* consists of nine harmonicas affixed to the blades of an overhead electric fan, evoking the American bluesmen who played harmonica beneath fans in hot weather. As the fan blades spin round, air is propelled through the harmonicas, which emit a soft ethereal drone audible only when silence reigns in the gallery. As in the case of the other pieces in the show, you have to listen in order to hear.

Rahma Kazam

Sara Velas

Effulgence Of The North

Velaslavasay Panorama, Los Angeles, USA

Geographically speaking, the Velaslavasay Panorama is located just about a mile west from downtown Los Angeles, but this unusual project exists in a time and space far removed from the typical LA iconographies of perpetual youth, CGI cosmetics and paparazzi following this person or that. The central attraction of the Velaslavasay is a 360 degree painting entitled *Effulgence Of The North*, depicting a polar landscape with ice floes coming into view out of a cold nighttime backdrop. This type of immersive painting was popular in the 18th and 19th centuries, as vehicles for entertainment that would eventually fade against the bright lights of cinema. The irony of resurrecting such a spectacle in Los Angeles is painfully self-evident, and Sara Velas – the mastermind behind the Velaslavasay – wisely shifts focus toward the sublime.

Housed in a building that was originally a 1920s theatre called Fairyland and later a union hall for many decades, the Velaslavasay immediately harks back to an age long past. Through the lobby with its small vitrines with readymade objects that may or may not be for sale, a narrow staircase led me to the small round room which houses *Effulgence Of The North*. As my eyes adjusted to the darkened space, details of the polar environment began to emerge. An ice floe here, a distant mountain there. An uncanny sense of quiet and stillness pervaded the room – and upon further study, those ice floes and mountains literally popped out of the pictorial plane as sculptural elements that extended toward the centre of the room. Sound of cracked ice and running water crept on this side of the event horizon, followed by the static-laden sferics from VLF recordings of the Aurora Borealis. Then the low wattage bulbs that lit the painted surfaces subtly shifted colour, giving the illusion that a self-illuminating aurora was actually taking place in that very room. The brushstrokes of the painting itself always kept the artifice in place, even as the lights and sounds ebbed and flowed in this fully immersive installation. The experience was hypnotic and awe-inspiring.

In working through *Effulgence Of The North*, which was completed in 2005, Velas employed composer Moritz Fehr, who also brought in the purring drones of refrigerators and a soft, ethereal chorale from two female singers, Soo Yon Susie Lee and Asami Morita realised the sculptural elements, and Rosco Posada worked through much of the engineering (lighting, electrical, structural, etc). The whole piece required a fully orchestrated sensibility, and it is one that Velas has articulated with considerable skill. But *Effulgence Of The North* was not her first panorama, as that distinction goes to the *Panorama Of The Valley Of The Smokes* (2000), which was located in Hollywood and was demolished by a speculating developer who is still sitting on a vacant lot.

Beyond the *Effulgence Of The North*, the Velaslavasay also enjoys a well kept garden filled with cacti, succulents and even a handful of carnivorous plants. They also have a theatre for performances and screenings, whose programming tends towards the same eccentric aesthetic that persists within Velas's panorama: a delicate balance of old and new to arrive at wonder.

Jim Haynes

On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh

All tied up: No-Neck Blues Band in Krems

Florian Schulte (Chrome Hoof); Helmut Lackinger (NNCK)

Donaufestival

Various venues, Krems, Austria

Krems is a small and sleepy Austrian town nestling in the foothills of the Wachau, and surrounded by vineyards. It's the perfect place to hold this year's Donaufestival themed round the oxymoron Fake Reality, walking around the quiet, sun-drenched streets with their pastel-shaded Baroque architecture and leafy squares, Krems felt like an opium dream of Europe. The festival's theme, as curator Tomas Zierhofer-Kin explains in the programme notes, was to demonstrate the superiority of the "fake realities" that artists trade in versus those of the "religious and political agitators, financial gamblers and Disneyfiers of this world". While it's dubious whether any of the artists here offered anything as cohesive as a "reality", the best of them seemed to offer snapshots of alternate worlds.

And of the worlds on offer, The No-Neck Blues Band's was the most alien. Their set evolved from Amon Duul-style free rock and echoey enchanted garden improv into dark and humid drum machine dub. Keyboardist and vocalist Mico mewed like a thirsty cat while David Shuford injected a psychotic seam of darkness with his Black Metal vocals. Mico even managed to fit in a bizarre piano solo in a Michael Nyman vein, a buzzing Wasp synth soeling the edges of her playing in awkward counterpoint. Meanwhile, cellist Matt Heyner climbed the lighting rig to the ceiling of the venue in an attempt to suspend his cello from the rafters, and bearded frontman Keith Connolly wound twine, first around his cymbals, using the strung cymbals like a fishing rod, casting off into the middle of the stage, then around the other members. Watching their show felt like watching the cactus-fuelled ceremonies of some ancient, alien tribe, and musically, they were the wildest and the freest act of the festival.

Following them, Austria's foremost new music export Christian Fennesz was on fine form, moulding luxuriant harmonies into gooey orange shapes, panned percussion playing lazily over the top like light on water. During one poignant passage, he built a single open chord into a vast, ecstatic drone, as the lighting technician trained bright orange spotlights on the crowd. All through the hall, couples held their partners closer and bathed in the beams.

Next to NNCK and Fennesz's sets, Sonic Youth's avant Grunge felt a little monochromatic. They played to a packed hall, arranged by age in concentric rings. Tweens in the middle moshing and raising devil horns, older heads nodding round the outskirts. Sonic Youth gave the crowd what they wanted, a trawl through the hits ("Tom Violence", "Eric's Trip", "Teenage Riot", etc) and a keyhole glimpse of the new album ("Calming The Snake"), but there was something chilly about their performance. They displayed none of NNCK's collective spirit – no banter, no smiles, no communication. It was a bit timid, even, as drummer Steve Shelley visibly restrained himself in the freakout section of "Silver Rocket". With Thurston Moore's battery of guitars – one for each song – sending out all the wrong "supergroup" signals, Sonic Youth looked like a group of consummate professionals who'd come together to get a job done. It was a shame, particularly as Moore and Gordon's Mirror/Dash performance earlier that day had felt so intimate, teasing hushed atmospherics from their guitars to a rapt crowd, chiming perfectly with the onset of dusk over Krems's beautiful Minoriten church.

Italy's Goblin proposed a world where punk never happened. At their first concert for 30 years, they played a selection of classic material from their 1970s horror film soundtracks, from *Profondo Rosso*, *Suspiria* and *Zombi*, plus material from their 2005 album *Return Of The Goblin*. It was amusing to see the young, trendy crowd rocking out to Goblin – much of their set consisted of precisely the kind of symphonic Prog funk and Gary Moore-style guitar solos long considered the high watermark of cheese. But the exigencies of film soundtrack composition always saved Goblin from Prog's worst excesses and gave them a unique palette, tempering their more grandiose moments with creepy nursery rhyme melodies and ghoulish whispers – current Black Metal fantasists like Deathspell Omega or Velvet Cacoon (and even NNCK) owe much to Goblin's pioneering vocal work.

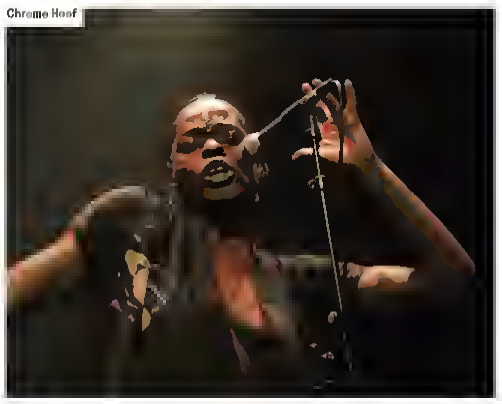
Also flying the flag for the Prog revival were London outfit Chrome Hoof, who splice disco and Acid House with Metal riffs and angular symphonic jazz. They also happen to wear chrome coloured hooded robes, count two dancing glimps among their members, and are fronted by a blue-lipped voodoo priestess with a voice that reaches from feral shriek to raunchy cabaret moan. Grace Jones meets Sun Ra meets High On Fire meets Leonard Bernstein – Chrome Hoof are as preposterous and as wonderful as that weird encounter sounds.

Black Dice played the loudest set of the festival, baffling the crowd before a formidable wall of amps. But by far the heaviest set came from The Butthole Surfers, who headlined the second day, filling the main hall with their filthy, glutinous swamp-psych. Harmonically, rhythmically, melodically, The Butthole Surfers' songs are simple – but as with all the finest garage rock, there's genius in the details. Smell stylistic idiosyncrasies transform their music into something entirely other – frontman Gibby Haynes's oscillator interjections leaking acid all over the mix, the constant pitch-tweaking on his vocals, the subtle detuning on Paul Leary's guitar gesturing at entropy, the surreal lyrics ("*I smoke Elvis Presley's toenails*"). The Butthole Surfers are still sonic illusionists of the highest order, their sound refracted, filtered through a system of warping mirrors.

The fourth and final day of the festival's first week featured an almost all-female line-up, curated by Chicks On Speed. Here, Yo! Majesty shone – they're not exactly the most agile lyricists, but their ghettotech beats and raucous celebrations of female masturbation were a breath of fresh air in a programme dominated by synth-pop and electroclash (MEN, Koko Von Napoo, Anet Ben-David). Ben David's set was effective too, particularly when she was joined onstage by a harpist for a set of romantic torch songs, augmenting the synth arrangements with rippling string work, joining the dots between Edith Piaf, Joanna Newsom and Laurie Anderson. But perhaps the most memorable moment of the day was New York performance artist Ann Liv Young tying the penises of her two male co-performers together, then miking up the 'tweng' when she plucked the string – a deft snipe at the male collector mentality of so much contemporary avant sound practice.

The Donaufestival is a great festival, and with a large endowment from the government, it can afford to ha extravegant – this year they flew Kenyan art collective Slum TV over to build a slum around the main Stadtspark, creating a Kenyan bar and cafe area. The festival uses quality space too – two large concert halls, a medieval church, an art gallery and another substantial hall for performance art shows and film screenings. If anything was missing, it was grassroots support – local artists were conspicuous by their absence.

Nick Richardson



Chrome Hoof

Bleuses in motion: David Byrne

Ether 09
Southbank Centre, London, UK
The Ether Festival's route to the outer fringes of contemporary music and art is through, as their mission statement declares, "cutting-edge collaborations and cross-arts experimentation" – holding hands across the cultural realm, bringing genres and mediums together. In practice, it can mean that each night of the festival, which is staggered over a couple of weeks, feels like a completely different flavour of curate's egg. Each and every event has its own character, but they're often fleeting encounters between musicians and mediums, brief connections before their paths diverge again. Several of the events are somewhat disappointing, and a few burn vividly in the memory. Perhaps that's simply the nature of the beast.

Particularly unsatisfying is a cultural chit-chat in front of a large paying audience, between Brian Eno and Jon Hassell. The main themes are the obsession with 'control' in modern life, the soundbite banality of contemporary media, and the need to cultivate an experience of "surrender" in our cultural lives. The points are made eloquently, but the pair offer no sense of how these ideas might work in practice, either in artistic appreciation or production. Eno suggests surrendering to aesthetic experience could be an "active" choice, but this idea remains tantalisingly – conveniently? – unexplained within the relatively short timeframe of the talk. His charm and wit grease the wheels of the discussion, but the result is the cogs just spinning aimlessly.

Mouse On Mars perform a soundtrack to Werner Herzog's *Fata Morgana* (1971), an astonishing visual scrapbook of lives lived on the fringes of the Sahara. It's a strange choice, with the bright, busy electronics of Mouse On Mars completely at odds with the desolation and sense of marginality expressed in the film itself. Eventually the muffled vocals of Jan St Werner and layered echo textures create a subtle, shifting counterpoint to the film, the sandblasted textures resembling the desert's scouring eroding power. But it says more about the flexibility of the group than Herzog's film itself, whose own soundtrack, consisting principally of Leonard Cohen songs, is a much more striking encounter between human presence and desolation.

Electronic duo Plaid's collaboration with a gamelan orchestra is a more organic fit. Their work has frequently recalled the tonal complexity of a gamelan orchestra, a connection most explicit in "Chash", the code to the last album by The Black Dog before Andy Turner and Ed Handley split to work as a duo, where seven beatless minutes of chiming tones unfold with a dense but intuitive internal logic. A short unaccompanied set by the duo engages effectively in microtonal, if not explicitly Indonesian, intervals – to Western ears, it's thrillingly unfamiliar terrain, as if they're tapping unstable energies that jolt the melodies out of the usual ruts. When the gamelan players emerge with the duo sitting cross-legged at laptops in the middle of the orchestra, the difficulty of getting a dialogue between electronica and a multi-person ensemble becomes evident. The gamelan players are restricted to fairly brief phrases, as if slotted into Plaid's rigid gameplan. Finally, the beats soften a little, as if they've been marinating in the sound of the gamelan, and the electronic and acoustic sounds become beautifully, if briefly, transclusicent.

David Byrne's musical trajectory over the last two decades hasn't quite been a road to nowhere, but his TV drama soundtracks and last year's *Everything That Happens Will Happen Today* – an "electronic gospel" collaboration with Brian Eno – have the narrowed emotional compass of a man settling into semi-retirement. Against the odds, his performances at Ether are startling. It's billed as The Songs Of Byrne And Eno, but the latter makes just a cameo appearance on backing vocals for the second night's encore. There's a single perfunctory workout from *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts* (with Byrne himself declaiming the sampled vocals of "Help Me Somebody"), with tracks from the Eno-produced Talking Heads albums of the late 1970s forming the backbone of the set.

The music isn't exactly heavy funk but the whole performance, with three intricately choreographed dancers and all the performers dressed in white, is imbued with restless fluidity. Byrne dodges as a dancer flies leaps between himself and the mic stand, or is vaulted over while he takes a guitar solo, the stage is rearranged mid-song by dancers moving the mic stands around. Everything is in constant motion, nothing is repeated, and Byrne himself is subsumed in the chaos. There's not the cathartic visual energy that old rockers usually aim for, but a constant, centreless hive of activity. The presentation is stunningly innovative, although you suspect it'll be other musicians rather than Byrne that'll take such ideas and build on them.

Keyboardist Matthew Shipp's duo with guitarist Jason Pierce as SpaceShipp is the most engaged collaboration of the whole event. Unlike some of the other concerts, the notion of collaboration isn't primarily an entry point (or selling point) for the casual listener, and instead there's an ongoing working relationship between the pair. It's also the first gig in years which has made me went to pick up a guitar again. Jason Pierce proves himself a formidable Noise guitarist, churning out a choking plume of fuzz and feedback for around an hour and a half, with Matthew Shipp's much quieter organ reduced to seeking pinpoints of overtone, like a man in a hurricane struggling heroically to keep his footing. Finally, the storm breaks and Shipp, moving to celeste, plays a beautifully uneasy coda of repeated, clustered notes, accompanied by Pierce's raw and bloody guitar scratchings. When it ends, the majority of the audience have already left the cosy setting of the Queen Elizabeth Hall, but this was a rare collaboration at Ether which managed to move way beyond polite dialogue.
Derek Walmsley

Valentin Silvestrov

György Kurtág's *Kafka-Fragmente*

MaerzMusik

Various venues, Berlin, Germany

With the themes of Reduction and Deconstruction the key axis of this year's Berlin festival of aktuelle Musik was America-Russia. The most exciting Russian contribution promised to be two concerts by Dmitri Kourliendski's Structural Resistance Group – six young composers none previously known to me. Two Sunday concerts at Daniel Libeskind's remarkable Judisches Mnsenm showcesed vocal works plns a chamber programme, probing the roots of Reductionism with hesitant truncated gestures and sudden eruptions that subsided rapidly. In the instrumental concert, only Alexei Sioumak's *cl or ond Polka*, where a crazy deconstructed dance had the musicians stamping their feet approximately in time, provided rhythmic and melodic relief from an austere dist of extended techniques – scraping, rubbing and sawing on unconventional regions of the instrument, and toneless breaths. Most extreme were two near silent realisations of Vadim Karassikov's *in the flame of the dream*, for solo accordion, and for violin, cello and accordion. These weren't ideal for the large Glashof or the Jüdlsches Museum's glass-covered courtyard, with the surrounding hum of visitors.

By late evening, the now silent Glashof wes en ideal venue for the portrelt of Velentin Silvestrov. Born In Klev in 1937, in the former Soviet Union but outside Russia, Silvestrov raised his profile as en ECM composer at quite an advanced stage of his career, throngh his postmodern 'remin'scences' ot late Romantic symphonism. His 70 minute cycle for violin and piano from 2004–05, *Melodien Aus Den Augenblick* (literally *Melodies From The Moment* – the original title would be in Russian) touched on a characteristic veriety of indeterminate cod-Romentic idioms, but at inordinate and baffling length. Bogdana Plvnenko end Valerij Matjuchin produced quietly tremulous interpretations, their graceful intensity also sustaining the composer's performance of his solo piano *Bogotelles And Serenades* from 2006–07, which combined his obvious excitement – he nearly fell off the stage when he left at the end – with en understated lyricism. I'm still unsure whether Silvestrov's more intimate works are closer to the kitsch of Ludovico Elnaudi or the jewel-like miniaturism of Federico Mompou.

A Latvian despite being born in Archengel, Vladimir Tarasov co-founded The Ganelin Trio in Brezhnev-era Rnssle. The concepts and textures of his compelling solo percussion composition *Atto XII* owed a lot to jazz, but refracted through an East European sensibility – without the effortless swing which few European drummers seem to achieve, but showing a rugged originality. His performence deployed an elaborate kit, ending with a polgnant recorded amppet of Kurt Schwitters a *Ursonate* against tiny tumbling bells. Also late at the Sonic Arts Lounge was The International Nothing, a clarinet dno of Kai Fagaschinski and Michael Theke. They worked at the borders of improvisation and composition to create slow-moving choruses of multiphonics – a sophisticated language whose instrumental demands must be stupendous, though they were delivered with a dry wit.

Another Sunday concert at the Jüdlsches Museum featured The Keiros Quartet. In e programme thet pushed the boundaries of their favoured hardcore modernism, Ben Johnston's *String Quartet No 5* (1979) poignantly recalled the idiom's conversational potential, couched in the composer's extended Just Intonation. Johnston, born 1926 in Macon, Georgia, was there at the end to receive applause, a living connection with Partch, Milhaud and his teacher John Cage. *Night-turn*, by Dmitri Kourliandski of The Structural Resistance Group, consisted almost entirely of toneless pizzicato near the bridge of the instruments, and ran the gamut from dry to desiccated.

US original Robert Ashley is no member of any compositional group or tendency. His TV opera *Music With Roots In The Aether* (1976) was experienced through seven TV monitors with headphones. This 14 hour work, sampled intermittently and not totally satisfactorily at the Festspiele Haus, features work and interviews by Philip Glass, Alvin Lucier, Gordon Mnmma, Pauline Diveros, Terry Riley end others – I guess distracted listening was the aim.

Hugues Dufourt's percussion work *Erewhon* (1972–76), proved an interesting but ultimately less compelling percussive alternative to Tarasov. Inspired by Samuel Butler's novel, and performed by Les Percussions De Strasbourg at the Festspiele Haus, this hour long structure featured six percussionists and 150 instruments. Dufourt, born 1946, is e spectralist composer and member of the legendary L'Itinéraire, but he looked like a benign senior CEO when he came on stage at the end.

The highlight of the testival for me was Kurtag's *Kofka-Fragmente*, a setting for soprano and violin of aphoristic, poetic texts from Kafka's diary. It received the most lavish yet haunting staging at the etmospheric Hebbel Theatre. Selome Kammer end Carolin Widmann were real dramatic protagonists, assisted by a chorus who commented visually on Kafka's searing texts, and a TV monitor that presented a subtly contrasting stag-ng. Kammer sang her awkward lines – including the disturbing image of Kafka and his lover like two snakes in the moonlight – even while lying or kneeling onstage. I can't see such high production values occurring anywhere except Germany. For cutting-edge contemporary composition, I doubt if there's e better festivel enywhere than MaerzMusik.

Andy Hamilton

Merce Cunningham with John Paul Jones/Takehisa Kosugi/Sonic Youth

Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, USA

Who would have thought that Takehise Kosugi, John Cage's successor as musical director of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, would be the one to bridge the gap between Sonic Youth and former Led Zeppelin bassist John Paul Jones? The three-wey collaboretion was e slightly leftfield (although both Jones end Thurston Moore had separately worked with Cunninghem's Dence Compeny before) but nonetheless inspired idea. The occasion wes Cunninghem's 90th birthday, commemorated with a new piece, *Nearly Ninety* (which, as it happens, also runs for about 90 minutes).

As the house lights dim, Jones's shadow becomes evident behind a large scrim at the back of the stage; he's perched on some kind of ledge, coaxing a low E drone coming from his bass. After several minutes the dancers enter, as do Sonic Youth's familiar guitar hardwere chimes. Next to join in is Kosugi, with a blast of clattering electronics, and then a video of slowly gliding, galactic-looking metal structures is projected on the scrim. The piece becomes an ebb and flow of different audio and visual overlays: the dancers' various entrances and exits (there can be anywhere from one to 14 onstage at any given time) is reflected in, but not coordinated with, the different combinations of Jones, Kosugi end members of Sonic Youth. The music's drone orientation subtly contrests the constant motion and mobile-like arrangement of the dancers.

Near the end of the first half, the scrim rises to reveal the musicians behind yet another, less opaque scrim, and sequestered in a sprawling three bered construction resembling e hybrid between a quartz crystal and an Olympic diving board – Kosugi at the top, Jones on a staircase, Moore and Lee Ranaldo on the middle tier, Steve Shelley and Kim Gordon below. By now the video has shifted to black and white imeges of water drops and ripples. After the Intermission the second scrim has been removed entirely and the decor has been rotated. Several small screens descend, with close-ups of Kosugi's hands in action projected onto them. Kosugi's lateral stereo mix expands to snrround sound as he rolls nails around a metal plate outfitted with contact mics.

The music in the second half is dominated by Jones and Kosugi solos – Jones adding different digital enhencements to his bass sound, and Kosugi letting fly with ell manner of ferocious noises (if Cunningham is erguebly et the peak of his powers at 90, then Kosngi is jnst commend-ng at 20 years his jun-or). In the piece's lest minntes, Jones plays a bona tide chord progression (quite an appealing one at that), wli-ch is eventually lost in e Kosugi/Sonic Youth-generated storm cloud. Still tlush with new ideas at its finele, *Neorly Ninety* doesn't seem to end as much as simply stop – en indication that Cunninghem himself shows no sign of slowing down.

Alan Light

Simon Leigh (Rymix), Pascal Victor (Kurtag), Kai Rienert (Silvestrov)

Aaron Dilloway + Nate Young
The Grosvenor, London, UK
This was a very grown-up show. Those who had come expecting nerve-shredding Prurient-style power electronics were left not disappointed (though one drunkard did bellow "Turn it up!" during the first five minutes of Dilloway's set), but certainly shocked by the gravity and intelligence of Young and Dilloway's performances.

The two former Wolf Eyes members – Dilloway left the group in 2005 to join his wife in Nepal – each played separate solo sets. Young first. Beginning with low-key junkyard atmospherics, wobbly trash percussion and wheedling synth sounds, he launched into a piece of Poe-like spoken word: *"Someone help me out of the bottomless pit. ..."* The crowd were sceptical at first, but Young's vocals were surprisingly affective. His clunking periphrases – *"... a bag made of paper ..."* – gave his text an unsettling awkwardness, as though he was trying to wrap his tongue around words he had forgotten how to speak. Developing the composition, Young used mouth sounds, captured via a contact-miked harmonica, to probe the emissions of his ancient equipment, meshing flickering electronics, viscous slobber and feedback – like velociraptors chewing on movie projectors.

Young's textural control was utterly compelling, yet his sounds still felt rooted in basement Noise convention. Dilloway's sounds were far more abstract. In his work over the past few years he has been known for incorporating field recordings from his Nepalese travels. But tonight his tape and oscillator constructions left any reference to the real world at the door. Sonically, the whorls of formant-shifting synth tones Dilloway sent winging round the room, bristling with bright thorns of noise, were in a similar ballpark to Haswell & Hacker's UPIC compositions. But what made his set particularly astonishing was the gap between the sounds Dilloway was producing and what he appeared to be doing on stage. Instead of a guy hunched behind a laptop, he was physically engaged with his equipment to an extraordinary degree. He had two mics lodged inside his mouth into which he leaned and resped, rocking about like a lunatic while ripping fistfuls of tape from the machines in front of him. Awesome to behold.

Lofty comparisons were made in the bar afterwards: names such as Karlheinz Stockhausen and Iannis Xenakis were heard floating over the booze fumes. But for once these did not seem wide of the mark, as Dilloway pinned an incredibly 'avant' sonic vocabulary to the visceral performance style of power electronics.
Nick Richardson

PJ Harvey & John Parish in London

PJ Harvey & John Parish
Shepherd's Bush Empire, London, UK
Since the beginning of her career, PJ Harvey has been conscious of the abiding idea that she is an intimidating, scraped-back severe, 50 Foot Queen-e of a proposition, whose work represents the tumultuous autobiographical outpourings of a soul in the grip of blues demons. This she has countered in various ways – she's polite and chatty to a fault with her audience onstage, sports a penchant for glamorous, almost dollish dresses, and in interviews gently deflects away any attempt to connect her lyrics with her private life.

The resulting spectacle is a singularly engaging but paradoxical mixture: friendly yet in terms of the potency of the songs fearsome. At Shepherd's Bush Empire, playing with longtime collaborator John Parish and a trilby-hatted group, she was very much at ease in their company, playful in the face of an audience of seasoned and affectionate devotees, a sea of early middle-aged reasonableness over which she throws her inflamed lyrics, all taken from the two albums she has recorded with Parish – 1996's *Dance Hall At Louse Point* and this year's *A Woman A Man Walked By*.

Harvey enjoyed being liberated from any instrumental obligations save the odd shake of a pair of maracas, although I did miss her guitar playing in particular, that raw wash of almost supernatural blues/rock raucousness. Parish and co provided highly capable and very well turned, if not incandescent accompaniment on the likes of "Rope Bridge Crossing" and "Taut", with tick-tocking mandolins a prominent feature.

The unfettered Harvey was, naturally, the star. Her vocals were an orchestration of multiple personality disorder, ranging from the almost painfully high register of "Leaving California", to full-throated neo-blues hollering, to the near-silence of a plaintive child's prayer, to a sinister vocal that recalled the young boy's "rad rum" mantra in *The Shining*. It's all role playing, an artist seeking out her true range, but her intensity is both enigmatic and slightly unnerving – on the comedic but perverse "A Woman A Man Walked By/The Crow Knows Where All The Little Children Go" she started dancing in a manner faintly reminiscent of Thelonious Monk, as if lost in the trance of her own music, at once detached from it and enraptured. At times it feels like Harvey is channelling old dead blues spirits. But more truthfully and prosaically, she is a vital specimen of a more evolved age for popular female singer-songwriting, the late 1980s and 90s, when strange libertles could be taken, liberties not allowed to today's procession of photogenic coffee-table neo-soul belters.
David Stubbs

Joker

Venetian Snares

Planet Mu presents FILTH
Corsica Studios, London, UK
The Mod/rocker divide can reach into some unexpected places. It wasn't immediately apparent in Corsica Studios' railway arches, with a fairly diverse selection of electronic music fans circulating between the two main areas enjoying the thick layers of post-Timbaland rhythmic complexity of Slugabed, the highly-caffeinated hybrid of vainglorious crunk riffs with dubstep lurch and Ghetto Booty propulsion of Starkey, and the cosmic reimaginings of generations of rave (including deft live re-edits of a vintage Tom & Jerry Jungle tune and Widaboys' Bassline House) by Boxcutter. But by the time Aaron Funk aka Venetian Snares – whose album launch this was – began his set, with Bristol's Joker playing in the second room, the division in the crowd could hardly have been starker.

The main room was as close as one can find in the electronic music world to a Metal gig: a mass of surging bodies, sweat drenched, dreadlocked and pierced, and in many cases semi-clad. Funk's music, too, shared many qualities with Metal, beholden to the past (in his case to Jungle's hyperkinesis – as jokely celebrated on Planet Mu's "MY OLD MAN'S A JUNGLIST" T-shirts on sale): distortion and derangement, the splenetic breakbeats. Acid lines and gabba kicks were purpose-built to get people moshing and – yes – headbanging.

Room two was more sparsely populated with a tendency towards post-hiphop sharp-dressing: none more so than Joker himself, a young man keen to reintroduced ravers to the concept of "fresh to death". They danced too – facilitated by Joker's gliding, cybernetic P-funk-meets-Trance synth lines and gleaming retooling of Grime's rhythms – although many were content to stand and marvel at how impeccably executed, how expensive-sounding, how modernist his productions were. This sense of Mod-nowness and soul influence continued through into the equally snappily dressed Ikonika's DJ set, joining dots from the bass-dominated House beats of UK Funky back to El-B's Garage and the dub/soul of Geiom's "Reminissin".

However, this was a rave at heart, and after a certain time of night differentiations tend to be forgotten – or confused – at raves. And so it was as the smell hours wore on, the slightly more conventionally dubstep-centred beats of Joker's Bristol compadre Gammy, Neil Landstrumm's live set recreating Hardcore and Grime rhythms with the steely sonics of analogue Techno, and the smashed-up, hyperactive rave-step wobble of Birmingham's Rafferty bringing the factions back together. But for those key couple of hours, the poles of Planet Mu became very clearly visible, and while the headbangers lost their shit to Venetian Snares's "Filth", the smarter kids with cleaner shoes most definitely knew what time it was.
Jee Miggs

Shot2hits.net (Harvey), Katie Parish (FILTH)

mētēo
MULHOUSE
MUSIC
FESTIVAL
13-29.08.2009
JOANA ADERI/MARC BARON/PASCAL BATTUS/
FRÉDÉRIC BLONOY/SÉBASTIEN BORGO/CARLA BOZU
PETER BRÖT /TONY BUCK/DANIELA CA
VIDCH EL COLARD/CLARE COOPER
TS CORSA NICOLAS DESMARCHELIER/DJ RUPT
N EDWARD EL ERDMANN/ERIKM/
RIE EX G/JOY FREMPONG /F
JEAN-PHI /JEAN-LUC GUIONI
FRITZ HA LOTTE HUG/CATHE
YANNIS KYRI ERIC LA CASA/FR
LIONEL MARCH NDY MOOR/JEAN-
EVAN PARKER/E PERRAUD/MA
MARINO PLIAKAS E POULSEN
FREDY STUDER/
WORKSHOPS
24-29.08.2009
CATHERINE JAUNIAUX
ANDY MOOR
JEAN-LÉON PALLANDRE
EDWARD PERRAUD
FESTIVAL MÉTÉO
BP 1335 68056 MULHOUSE CEDEX
+33 (0)3 89 45 36 67
INFO@FESTIVAL-METEO.FR
WWW.FESTIVAL-METEO.FR
MULHOUSE
Région Alsace
Haut-Rhin
sacem
SPEDIDAM
FCM
CNV
pro helvetia
SUISA
mouvement

Resonance104.4fm

Resanance104.4fm supports
The Necks + Hauschka.
Unian Chapel, Londan.
27 May 2009 at 7pm.
www.qujunktians.com

Phill Niblock.
Cafe Oto, 18 – 22 Ashwin Street, London E8.
24 May 2009 at 8pm.
www.cafeoto.co.uk

Unnamed Festival.
Cafe Oto, 18 – 22 Ashwin Street, London E8.
11 and 12 June 2009.
With Keith Rowe, Rhodri Davies, Lee Pattersan,
Seymaur Wright, Clive Bell et al.
www.cafeoto.co.uk

Visit the Resanance stall at the Art Car Boot Fair
Old Truman Brewery, 149 Brick Lane, London E1.
Sunday 14 June 2009, 12 to 6pm.
With Peter Blake, Gavin Turk, Bob & Roberta Smith,
Pearce & Ramsey, Studio Voltaire and many mare.
www.artcarbootfair.com

Specialist music, radio-art and sonic experimentation this Summer on Resonance104.4fm

Manday, 2pm: Edible Landscapes
Manday, 5pm: Artrocker, with Paul Cox
Tuesday, 2pm: The London Ear, with Ben Thampson
Tuesday, 3.30pm: Atlantic Waves, with Miguel Santas
Wednesday, 12pm: Farside Radio, with Paul Fisher
Wednesday, 6pm: London Diaspara Live!
Wednesday, 11pm: 50/50 Saund System
Thursday, 12pm: Caunter Culture, with Raugh Trade Shaps
Thursday, 2pm: The Traditianal Music Haur, with Reg Hall & Kevin Sheils
Thursday, 9pm: Adventures in Modern Music, with The Wire
Friday, 3pm: Wavelength, with William English
Friday, 5.30pm: The Sound Projector, with Ed Pinsent
Saturday, 4.30pm: OST, with Janny Trunk
Saturday, 9.30pm: Jahnny Mugwump & The Exotic Pylan

Visit our on-line shop for our exclusive T-shirts, CDs, mogozines ond more!

LMC www.l-m-c.org.uk
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND
moose
blatera.com
LMC registered charity number 290236
interoute
the funding network
The Gloss House Trust.
design by beta

PLEASE VISIT

THOMAS BAYRLE
ANN LISLEGAARD
AND ULTRA-RED

at RAVEN ROW
56 ARTILLERY LANE
LONDON E1

from 28 May
to 2 August 2009

Public Record

FREE | MUSIC | NOW
www.publicrec.org

No 2.01.017

WHAT IS THE SOUND OF THE WAR ON THE POOR?

PR No 2 01 002
Fifteen Sounds of the War on the Poor VOL 1

PR No 2 01 003
Fifteen Sounds of the War on the Poor VOL 2

PR No 2 01 004
Fifteen Sounds of the War on the Poor VOL 3

PR No 2 01 005
Fifteen Sounds of the War on the Poor VOL 4

Emily Abendroth PHILADELPHIA Alejandra & Aaron MALMÖ Pablo Alvarez WASHINGTON Luigi Aruhatti ZÜRICH Knut Åsdam OSLO Dieter Behr & Fatar Sibotech-Jenseida VIENNA Toshiro Bishoko MARSEILLE Žeijko Blaće CARLSTAD BLK w/ BEAR WASHINGTON, D C Ava Bromberg LOS ANGELES Sean Burn NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE Cassy BERLIN Checkpoint303 RAMALLA/PARIS William Crisp NEW HAVEN ESTATE Pawan Dhali KOLKATA Deison BELÉM Christopher DeLaurenti SEATTLE Michelle Dixon LOS ANGELES/PARIS Elders of Zion GILAN/SEATTLE Filipes Elkshow SANTA ROSA Ismail Farouk JOHANNESBURG Fax MEXICALI Field of The Neo-Futurist Collective KNIGHTON Heribert Friedl VIENNA GPV-C/E... Centre EASTON GitAr SANTA ROSA Ryan Griffis & Sarah Rosa CHAMPAIGN URBANA Rogen GENEVA Ashley Hunt LOS ANGELES I Cut People SANTA ROSA Jack Tactic LOS ANGELES Kixly TIJUANA kLIMEK BERLIN Susanne Lang BERLIN Manrico Montero MEXICO CITY Antee Nikkilä HELSINKI Isabelle Nöi TORONTO Augusto Palma MÉRIDA Elliot Perkins TORNAY Andrew Poppy LONDON SEBUYS TORONTO Jennifer Rarick SAN FRANCISCO Pedro Rocha PORTO Rural Racism Project OSWEN Ilich Sabotage TIJUANA Garhard Schultz LOS ANGELES Duncan Speakman BRISTOL Steve Staffit BRISTOL Swimming Lesson PORTSMOUTH Terra Thaemlitz TOKYO Michael Trommer TORONTO Ultra-red LOS ANGELES Union de Vacinos LOS ANGELES Kevrin Van Meter | Team Colors PACIFIC NORTHWEST The Victorist LONDON T Ernest Wilbsy LONDON Adern X PISTOIA X-Chris SOUTH LONDON Starry Zafara MELBOURNE and Néctor Zárate MEXICO CITY ■

Cut & Splice Living Rooms

Wilton's Music Hall
London
19—20 June

Exploring the Domestic Soundscape
Mapping the Ultra-mundane
The Life of a Room Recorded

Performances, installations and broadcasts

Alvin Lucier
Aki Onda
Anthony Burr
Jaso Lescalleet
Brandon LaBelle
CM von Hausswolff and John Duncan
Domestic Appliance Audio Research Society
Tape That
Bob Levene
Felicity Ford
Mark Vernon
Erik Belgum s "Bad Marriage Mantra"

Plus a free sound and moving image event as part of reverberations series curated by no w here.

Cut & Splice is an annual festival of radical electro music and sound art co-produced by Sound and M and BBC Radio 3

For podcasts info and tickets
visit www cutandsplice com.

Design ben eades.com

no.w.here

WILTON'S
The City's hidden stage

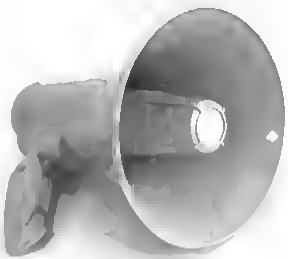
RADIO 3

Sound

Sonic

Middlesex University

composition
installation
performance
interactive
electroacoustic
electronic



BA Sonic Arts
MA Sonic Arts

Middlesex University
www.sonic.mdx.ac.uk
enquiries@mdx.ac.uk
+44 (0) 20 8411 5555

MILES OF SMILES PRESENTS

A HAWK AND A HACKSAW

HIGHLIFE
STEPHANIE HLADOWSKI

Thursday 18 June
CECIL SHARP HOUSE, 2 Regents Park Rd, London NW1 7AY

FENNESZ

GROUPER
NATURAL SNOW BUILDINGS

Tuesday 3 November
ST GILES-IN-THE-FIELDS CHURCH, 60 St Giles High St, London WC2H 8LG

Tickets wegottickets com
More info milesofsmiles co.uk
myspace.com/milesofsmileslondon

MILES OF SMILES

WWW MILESOFSMILES CO.UK

The Roots
with guest David Murray & more
produced in association with Jill Newman Productions
Saturday 13 June
Royal Festival Hall

David Murray & Gwo-Ka Masters
+ Jamaaladeen Tacuma
Saturday 13 June
Queen Elizabeth Hall

Yoko Ono Plastic Ono Band
featuring Antony Hegarty, Sean Lennon, Cornelius & more
Sunday 14 June
Royal Festival Hall

Baaba Maal
Monday 15 June
Royal Festival Hall

The Freewheeling
Yo La Tengo
Monday 15 June
Queen Elizabeth Hall

Moby
Tuesday 16 June
Royal Festival Hall

Bobby McFerrin
Wednesday 17 June
Royal Festival Hall

Patti Smith & The Silver Mt. Zion Memorial Orchestra
Thursday 18 June
Royal Festival Hall

Ornette Coleman
Reflections of *The Shape of Jazz to Come*
+ Bachir Attar & Master Musicians of Jajouka
Friday 19 June
Royal Festival Hall

Charlie Haden's Liberation Music Orchestra
with guests Carla Bley and Robert Wyatt
+ The Bad Plus
Saturday 20 June
Royal Festival Hall

Ornette Coleman
Reflections of *This is Our Music*
+ Bachir Attar & Master Musicians of Jajouka
Sunday 21 June
Royal Festival Hall

More artists and events to be confirmed soon. Check website for updates.

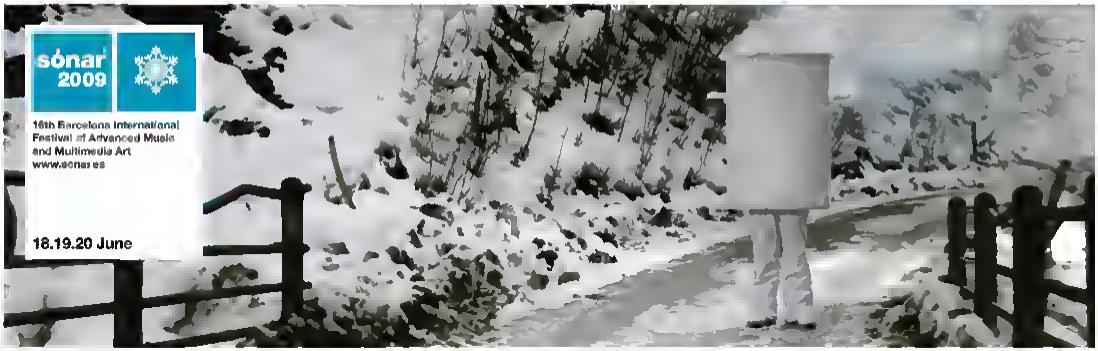
ORNETTE COLEMAN'S MELTDOWN

JUNE 2009

Tickets 0871 663 2520
www.southbankcentre.co.uk/meltdown
Text MELTDOWN to 62233 for updates
Standard network rates apply

Media partner
The Observer

SOUTHBANK CENTRE



orbital, grace jones, animal collective, fever ray, crystal castles, late of the pier, crookers, moderat, deadmau5, buraka som sistema, sebastian, erol alkan presents disco 3000, micachu & the shapes, james murphy & pat mahoney (lcd soundsystem special disco set), mujava, konono nº 1, rmiccee, ebony bones, la roux, mary anne hobbs, heartbreak, snd, byetone, alva noto, atom tm, joker, rob da bank, dan le sac vs scroobious pip, shed, marcel dettmann, beardyman, brodinski, breakbot, busy p, bullion, filastine, mike slott, martyn, roland olbeter + tim exile + jon hopkins, joe crepúsculo, michna, james pants, dsl, lars horntveth + bcn216, mark jones, xxxchange, lusine, jamie woon, donan concept, institut fatima, the sight below, the gaslamp killer... listen to them at SonarRadio www.sonar.es

an initiative of: Advancedmusic · Ajuntament de Barcelona Institut de Cultura · CCCB

in collaboration with: Generalitat de Catalunya Departament de Cultura i Mitjans de Comunicació · MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona

main sponsor: Caixa Catalunya

also sponsored by: Vodafone · Voll Damm

supported by: L'Auditori · Diputació Barcelona xarxa de municipis · Ajuntament de L'Hospitalet

tickets on sale: ticketmaster

associated media: BBC Radio 1 · Sonar Radia · Time Out · DJ

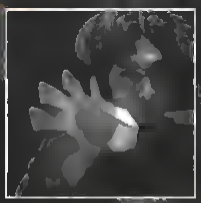
technological partners: stanton · Vestax · EGM

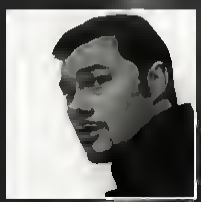
media collaborators: Wire · DJ · Debug · MTV · Pig · Blow Up · id

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Music to expand your horizons at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

New, post-romantic sounds


Vladimir Jurowski © K.Chard Cairman


René Pape

Sunday 31 May | 7.30pm
Mahler *Totenfeier*
(became 1st movement of Symphony 2)
Mendelssohn *Symphony 5*
(Reformation)
Rasch *Mein Herz brennt (UK première)*

Vladimir Jurowski *conductor*
René Pape *bass*
Katharina Thalbach *reciter*
Elisabeth Meister *soprano*

Mahler, the great, late romantic symphonist, began his orchestral journey with *Totenfeier*. He later used this early ground-breaking work as the first movement in his monumental Second Symphony.

Over 100 years later, **Torsten Rasch** uses the language of post-romanticism for his exploration of love and loss, as described in the poetry of Till Lindemann of Rammstein - the lyrics for *Mein Herz brennt*.

www.lpo.org.uk/explore

BOOK NOW
Special Offer for readers of THE WIRE: 20% off any ticket price | Standard prices £9-£55
Quote '*The Wire* Offer' subject to availability. Cannot be combined with any other offer or used against tickets already bought.

London Philharmonic Orchestra Ticket Office
020 7840 4242 | www.lpo.org.uk
Mon-Fri 10am-5pm. No booking fees

Southbank Centre Ticket Office
0871 663 2530 | www.southbankcentre.co.uk/lpo
Daily, 9am-8pm. £1.95 telephone / £1.45 online booking fees

Arts Council England

RESIDENT AT SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Beachdown Festival

Devil's Dyke Brighton 28–31 August 2009

& SAGRES
A natural partnership

Grace Jones

The Zutons
Ida Maria
Super Furry Animals
Laurent Garnier (live)
Youth
The Fall
St Etienne
James Hunter
Belleruche
The Beach Boys Own (Terry Farley and Clive Henry)
Norman Jay
Jah Shaka
Gilles Peterson
Soft Rocks and Greg Wilson
Breakin' Bread
Ed Solo and JFB
Quantic Soul Orchestra (Quantic and his Combo Barbaro)
Prince Buster and the Delroy Williams band
plus many more top acts

Hospital Records presents:
High Contrast
Skream
London Elektricity
Ed Rush
Cyantific
Caspa
Break
Randomer
Rod Azlan
MC Dynamite
MC Wrec
Script

50 local new and unsigned bands performing on the Brighton band stage. Over 30 stalls with organic and locally sourced top cuisine including The UK Fiery Food Chilli Festival, Love Fit Cafe, La Vache organic steak and Indian Summer. The Duke of Yorks cinema screen, an amazing new childrens area called Kids Down Comedy and cabaret acts are still to be announced

Tickets priced at £97.50 plus booking fee. 'Get down with the Beachdown' before tickets sell out! They're moving fast!

For more information visit beachdownfestival.com

Maker's Mark
Beachdown Festival
lost.fm

AT THE BORDERS BETWEEN SARDINIA AND JAZZ

XXIV edition - 26 August 2009 - 6 September 2009
Nuraghe's Square - Sant'Anna Arresi - 21.30

PROGRAM

26 August
- Many Paths Meet the Sea: for Alice Coltrane by Nicole Mitchell
- Hypnotic Brass Ensemble

27 August
- People, Place & Things by Mike Reed
- Evolution Ensemble by Dee Alexander

28 August
- 3 Kings by Jean Paul Bourelly
- Xenogenesis Suite by Nicole Mitchell

29 August
- Tribraco
- The Trio (Muhal Richard Abrams, George Lewis, Roscoe Mitchell)

30 August
- Interferenze Trio
- Cards for Orchestra Made in Chicago by Nicole & Roscoe Mitchell

1 September
- Wadada Leo Smith's Golden Quartet
- Lafayette Gilchrist solo
- The Hungry March Band

2 September
- The Binomial Tradition Chicago and the Avant Garde by Ernest Dawkins
- Harmonic Disorder by Matthew Shipp

3 September
- New Music Observatory Ansa by Butch Morris
- Pathways by Luis Perdomo

4 September
- Closest to the Sun by Abraham Burton
- Digital Primitive by Assif Tsahar, Cooper Moore, Chad Taylor

5 September
- An Die Musik by Nobu Stowe
- Stanley Jordan's Trio

22-23-24-25-26 August
- Hypnotic Brass Ensemble

31 August 1-2-3-4-5-6 September
- The Hungry March Band

Masterclass: Stanley Jordan - Muhal Richard Abrams - Roscoe Mitchell - Wadada Leo Smith

info Associazione culturale punta giara - tel 0781 966102
www.santannarresijazz.it - puntagiara@santannarresijazz.it

the unnamed music festival

11th to 13th June, London & Leeds

Thursday 11th June, Cafe Oto, London E8 3DL
Angharad Davies / Benedict Drew
Tom Chant / John Edwards +
Rhodri Davies / Lucio Capece
Lee Patterson / Louisa Martin +
Sebastian Lexer / Aleks Kolkowski

Friday 12th June, Cafe Oto, London E8 3DL
Keith Rowe / Seymour Wright
Martin Kuchen + Bechir Saade
Clive Bell / Matt Milton +
Jamie Coleman / Grundik Kasyansky
Paul Abbott / Ute Kanngiesser

Saturday 13th June, Seven Arts, Leeds, LS7 3PD
Keith Rowe / Seymour Wright
Martin Kuchen +
Jez riley French / Patrick Farmer

tickets & info: www.anothertimbre.com

MA Composition
MA Composition (Audio Technologies)
MA Composition (Sound and Image)

Bath Spa University

instrumental, vocal electronic, digital and multimedia composition | work across different areas or specialise | an experimental and exploratory approach | collaborate with arts practitioners in other disciplines | small-group seminars and tutorials | tutors include Dr Joseph Hyde, Dr Andy Keep, and Dr James Saunders | This year's deadline 01/09/09 | j.hyde@bathspa.ac.uk for more information

Bath Spa University

www.bathspampa.com

BMus POPULAR MUSIC

BRAND-NEW COURSE STARTS SEPTEMBER

songwriting, performanc in t
ndustry
e with new investment of over hal
London's music scene
tive lectures and workshops and
ance and theatre student
contacts and work experience with
arts administration

Find out more at www.mdx.ac.uk

Call or email today for a flyer describing this brand new course and apply to start September 2009

Course Enquiries:

020 8411 5555 • enquiries@mdx.ac.uk

Middlesex University

Friday 15th May - Rainbow Warehouse , Birmingham

Melt Banana

Lash Frenzy vs Mort + Glatze

Thursday 21st May - Hare & Hounds , Birmingham

SUBLIME FREQUENCIES

Omar Souleyman + Group Doueh

Saturday 23rd May - Vivid , Birmingham

Prurient & Cold Cave

Beestung Lips + Nicholas Bullen + Iron Fist Of The Sun

Sunday 31st May - Hare & Hounds , Birmingham

Chrome Hoof + guests

Saturday 13th June - Hare & Hounds , Birmingham

Aethenor + Black Elephant

Tuesday 23rd June - Hare & Hounds , Birmingham

A Hawk And A Hacksaw

Chairmaker + Mills & Boon

Advanced Tickets: www.thebigticketsellers.co.uk

CAPSULE!

Crafting extraordinary events for adventurous audiences

www.capsule.org.uk

THE METHOD OF SCIENCE

Equinox Festival

THE AIM OF RELIGION

LONDON, JUNE 12-14

A three day media arts festival dedicated to contemporary spiritual discovery and mystical tradition

MUSICAL PERFORMANCES BY

JOHN ZORN - COMUS

THRESHOLD HOUSE BOYS CHOIR

ÆTHENOR - T.A.G.C. - ROB MAZUREK

Z'EV - JAMES FERRARO - BURIAL HEX - DIETER MÜH - KINIT HER

HATI - PESTREPELLER - KTL - TAU-GAMI-I-TAN - CHAOS MAJIK

LECTURES AND PRESENTATIONS BY

RALPH METZNER - ERIC DAVIS

DAVID BETH - EDWIN POUNCEY - PHILIP FARBER

ROBERT WALLIS - MATT WILEY - PAOLA IGLIORI

STEPHAN GRASSO - PAUL DEVEREUX - ROBERT ANSELL

CARL ABRAHAMSSON - AARON GACH - KENDALL GEER

ORRYELLE DEFENESTRATE-BASCULE - MASAMBA FALL

RITUAL PERFORMANCES BY

ARKTAU EOS - RAYMOND SALVATORE HARMON

BARRY WILLIAM HALE'S NOKO

TRANSCENDENTAL CINEMA

DEZ-VTLENZ - MINDSCAPE OF ALAN MOORE

IRA COHEN - KINGS WITH STRAW MATS

TIMOTHY LEARY - 8 CIRCUIT MODEL OF CONSCIOUS

PAOLA IGLIORI - AMERICAN MAGUS

MASSAMBA FALL - THE SEED OF JOY

JAMES FERRARO - DIMINISHING SHRINE RECYCLES

CRAIG BALDWIN - MOCK UP ON MU

HARRY SMITH - HEAVEN AND EARTH MAGIC

ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY - THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

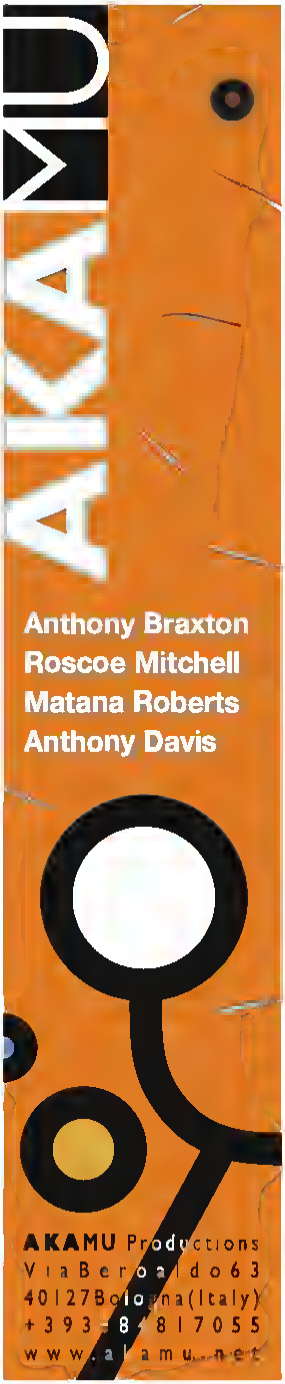
RAYMOND SALVATORE HARMON - THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

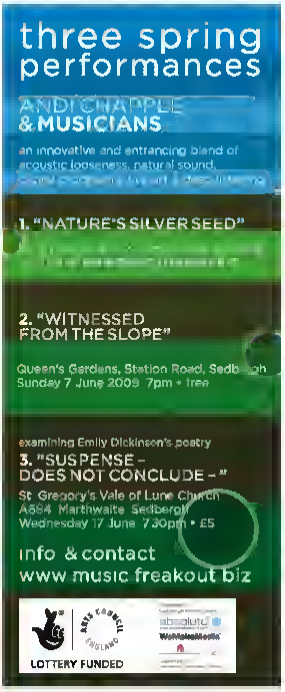
MAYA DEREN - DIVINE HORSEMEN

KATHRYN FERGUSON - LE BETE

EQUINOXFESTIVAL.ORG

TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM WEGOTTICKETS.COM


AKAMU
Anthony Braxton
Roscoe Mitchell
Matana Roberts
Anthony Davis
AKAMU Productions
Via Beroaldo 63
40127 Bologna (Italy)
+393-84817055
www.akamu.net

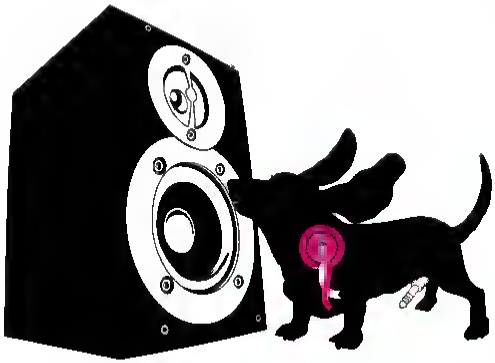

three spring performances
ANDI CHAPPLE & MUSICIANS
an innovative and entrancing blend of acoustic looseness, natural sound,
1. "NATURE'S SILVER SEED"
2. "WITNESSED FROM THE SLOPE"
Queen's Gardens, Station Road, Sedbergh
Sunday 7 June 2009 7pm • free
examining Emily Dickinson's poetry
3. "SUSPENSE – DOES NOT CONCLUDE – "
St Gregory's Vale of Lune Church
A684 Marthwaite Sedbergh
Wednesday 17 June 7.30pm • £5
info & contact
www.music freakout.biz
LOTTERY FUNDED

MUSICA GENERA FESTIVAL 2009
INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF CONTEMPORARY MUSIC AND ART OF SOUND
www.musicagenera.net
Martin Brandlmayr (AT)
Robin Fox (AUS)
Reinhold Friedl (DE)
Edwin van der Heide (NL)
JAZKAMER (NOR)
Elka Krajewska (PL-USA)
Lionel Marchetti (FR)
Norbert Möslang (CH)
Stefan Németh (AT)
Jeremie Noettinger (FR)
PAN SONIC (FIN)
Phroq (CH)
Marcus Schmickler (DE)
SYNCHRONATOR (NL)
Hild Sofie Tafjord (NOR)
John Wiese (USA)
Christian Wolfarth (CH)
Anna Zaradny (PL)
26, 27, 28 of June 2009
Warsaw, Poland
Dramatyczny Theatre
Museum of Modern Art
in Warsaw
Powiększenie

Sound and Music
Head of Programmes
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND
Salary range £25,000 - £35,000 + pension and flexible benefits, full time role based in Central London
Sound and Music is looking for an exceptional manager and creative programmer to head up our programming team. Working in line with the agreed vision and values of the organisation, you will be responsible for the delivery of all Sound and Music's live events output whilst developing Sound and Music's reputation as a leader and innovator through our programming both nationally and internationally
Sound and Music is a new company formed from the recent merger of four organisations working to engage more people with new music (in any genre) and contemporary sound art. We work directly with artists, composers, producers and venues to create and present work across the UK providing learning and professional development initiatives, digital platforms and information and resources to the creative music scene at home and abroad. See www.soundandmusic.org
To apply or for more details: info@hawthornsconsulting.co.uk
Application deadline: Friday 22 May 12 noon. First interviews: 1 June 2009
Registered charity number 1124801. Company number 6858102

FRANCISCO LOPEZ
JANA WINDEREN
BRANDON LABELLE
CHRIS WATSON
CHRISTINE ÖDLUND
LINDA TEOSDOTTER
HENRIK HÅKANSSON
BOTANIC SOUNDS
The Goteborg Botanical Garden
6.6 – 14.6 2009
CURATED BY JOACHIM NORDWALL & HENRIK RYLANDER. FOR MORE INFORMATION: LABELHEAD@HEADRECORDINGS.COM

WIRE ADVERTISING
Call Andy
or Shane
on
+44 (0)207
4225014
ads@
thewire.
co.uk
WIRE ADVERTISING



SUPERSONIC

FOR ADVENTUROUS AUDIENCES COMBINING MUSIC, ART, FILM & CAKE

CAPSULE PRESENTS

24TH - 26TH JULY 2009 BIRMINGHAM UK

CORRUPTED THE ACCUSED HEAD OF DAVID
THORR'S HAMMER SKULLFLOWER SCORN
JARBOE 65 DAYS OF STATIC IRON LUNG
ZU EARTHLESS BOBBY PREVITE zZz ARBOURETUM
CHRIS HERBERT KHYAM ALLAMI
PCM NANCY WALLACE PRE **GOBLIN**
PONTIAK KIM HIORTHØY
CARIBOU TAINT VENETIAN SNARES
DIADONAL THEO PRAM KYLIE MINOISE FLOWER/CORSANO DUO
MONOTONIX MASTER MUSICIANS OF BUKKAKE
BROWINB BERB SANS NIPPLE ATOMIZED

FOR HOTELS, TICKETS AND FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE GO TO:

WWW.SUPERSONICFESTIVAL.COM

WWW.THETICKETSELLERS.CO.UK 24 HR ORDER LINE 0844 870 0000

ROCK SOUND | ROCK-A-BILLIA

NO-FI

WWW.NO-FI.ORG.UK

Coming in to land

Jackal Blade - 'Lid' lp (MV Carbon & Carlos Giffoni)

Out n[illegible]

Derek Bailey, Tony Bevan, Pa[illegible] Yoshihide - 'Good Cop, [illegible]Cop'

The One Ensemble Orch[illegible] - 'Other [illegible]unders'

Courtis/Moore - 'Brokebox Juke'[illegible] lp

Emeralds/Pain Jerk - 'Europ[illegible]our 200' cd

Cath & Phil Tyler - 'D[illegible] Supper' cd

Mouthus & Yellow Swans - 'Li[illegible]on Conan Island' lp

Distributed in the UK by Forte[illegible] by Mimaroglu Music Sales

Digital distribution by D[illegible]gories Music

And available direct from us for £6 each i[illegible] mail@no-fi.org.uk

NO-FI in Newcastle.

22/5 Alan Licht & Aki[illegible]n[illegible]a

Culture Lab, Newcastle University 8pm. FREE

23/5 Sublime Frequencies

Group Doueh and Omar Souleyman live

plus films/q&a and Alan Bishop/Mark Gergis dj sets

Star & Shadow Cinema, Newcastle 6pm-midnight £10

19/6 A Hawk And A Hacksaw

The One Ensemble, Cath & Phil Tyler

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary, Gateshead 8pm £10

Tickets on sale now from www.seetickets.com,

Alt Vinyl, Beat Down and RPM

Jazzfestival Saalfelden 09

27.-30.8.

Ornette Coleman | Oliver Lake Trio | The Ex

and many more ...

www.jazzsaalfelden.com

TICKET ORDER | ACCOMODATION | INFO

PO BOX 29 | 5760 SAALFELDEN - AUSTRIA | PHONE: +43.(0)6582 70660 | FAX: -99

office@jazzsaalfelden.com

Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events and clubs. Compiled by Lisa Blanning

UK Festivals

Aldeburgh Festival Aldeburgh
The 62nd year for Britain s contemporary music festival on the Suffolk coast features world premieres from Harrison Birtwistle and Elliott Carter as well as UK premieres from Thomas Adès, Julien Anderson and George Benjamin, plus festival walks, symposiums, lectures, open rehearsals and more. Suffolk various venues, 12–28 June, aldeburgh.co.uk

Cut & Splice: Living Rooms London
London's annual celebration of digital trickery (see Bites, page 6) explores the domestic soundscape. Participants include John Duncan and CM von Hausswolff, Alvin Lucier, Akl Onda, Graham Lambkin & Jason Lescalleet, Brandon Labelle, The Domestic Appliance Audio Research Society (Benedict Drew/Helena Gough/Lee Patterson), Tape That, Bob Levene, Felicity Ford, Mark Vernon, Erik Belgum and more. London Wilton s Music Hell, 19 & 20 June. £18 festival pass £10 day ticket, sonicartsnetwork.org

Equinox London
Three day medle erts festivel dedicated to spiritual discovery and mystical tredition with music, rituals, presentations and films (see Cross Platform, page 20). Artists include John Zorn, Comns z'ev, Æthenor, Pestrepeller, TAGC, Dieter Mnh, Threshold HouseBoys Choir, Burial Hex, James Ferraro and more, with lectnres from *The Wire* s Edwin Pouncey, Erik Davis, Ralph Metzner and more. London various venues, 12–14 June. £80 festival pass. £31–£27 day tickets. equinoxfestival.org

Meltdown London
The Southbank's annuel artist curated festivel features Ornette Coleman at the helm with concerts revisiting *The Shape Of Jazz To Come* (19 June) and *This Is Our Music* (21). Plus The Master Musicians Of Joujouka & Bachir Attar, Charlie Haden s Liberation Music Orchestra with guests Carla Bley and Robert Wyatt (20), Yoko Ono's Plastic Ono Band (14), Patti Smith & The Silver Mt Zion Memorial Orchestra (16), The Roots (13), Devid Murray (13), Yo La Tengo (15), Baabs Meal (15) and more. London Southbenk Centre, 13–21 June. times/prices vary. southbankcentre.co.uk/meltdown

Sound Census: Endymion London
Week-long 30th anniversary celebration for the UK chamber group Endymion, including performances of Harrison Birtwhistle's *Orpheus Elegies* (3 June), Feldmen's *Crippled Symmetry* (5) Messiaen s *Quartet For The End Of Time* (4) and more. London Kings Place, 3–6 June. times/prices vary, kingsplace.co.uk

Ultra-red UK
The international sound collective commence phase two of their School Of Echoes practice in e residency which includes e five session workshop with local activists, community organisers and artists discussing the theory and practice of Militant Sound Investigation and culminating in the presentation of an installation. London Reven Row, 11 June, 6pm, publicrec.org

Unnamed London, Leeds
Improvised and contemporary music in London and Leeds with Angharad Davies/Tom Chant/Benedict Drew/John Edwards, Keith Rowe/Martin Küchen/Seymour Wright, Jez riley French & Patrick Farmer and more. London Cafe Oto (11 & 12 June), Leeds Seven Arts (13). £18/festivel pass, £10/night. anothertimbre.com

International Festivals

Contemporenea Italy
Expensive festivel with events occurring throughout the year. June sees a live soundtreck to Terkovsky's *Nostolghio*. Rome Auditorium Parco della Musica, 9 June, 9pm. €15. auditorium.com

Gereeuschwelten #50 Germany
The Aufabwegen concert series celebretes its 50th with a one day festival featuring Colin Potter, Column One, Kraken and Bohrmaschine Privat. Muenster Cuba Cultur/Blackbox, 8 June, aufabwegen.com

June In Buffalo USA
Founded by Morton Feldman in 1975 as en American answer to Darmstadt, this festival now acts as e composers' think tank. Particlpants include Martin Bresnick, David Felder, Bernard Rands, Mathew Rosenblum and Harvey Sollberger plus resident ensembles Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Meridian Arts Ensemble, New York New Mnsic Ensemble, Sleo Sinfonietta and Verge Ensemble as well as special guests Christophe Desjardins, Mikko Luoma, Philippe Manoury, Stefano Scodanibbio and more. University At Buffalo, 1–7 June, music.buffalo.edu/juneinbuffalo

Master Musicians Of Joujouka Morocco
Three days and nights where guests stay with the musicians and their families, full board provided, and listen to performances in their natural setting. Joujouka Ahl Srif Mountains, 5–7 June. €250/festival pass (limited to 70 places). joujouka.net

Moers Germany
Outdoor festivel in western Germany celebrating rock and jazz. With George Lewis/Roscoe Mitchell/Muhel Richard Abrams, Nisennenmondai, Wayne Horvitz's Zony Mash (plus horns), Mostly Other People Do The Killing, Extra Life Soo-Jung Kae Quartet, Zs end more. Moers Schlosspark, 29 May–1 June, moers_festival.de

Musica Genera Poland
Contemporary music end sound art, with concerts, projections, performances, exhibitions, lectures end more. Artists include Martin Brandlmayr, Lionel Marchetti, Robin Fox, Norbert Moslang, Jazkamer, Pansonic, Hild Sofie Tafjord, Jerome Noetinger, John Wiese, Christian Wolfarth Edwin van der Heide, Marcus Schmickler and more. Warsew various venues, 26–28 June, musicagenera.net

Les Siestes Électroniques France
Self-proclaimed summer meeting point for digital artists with alva noto, Ariel Pink, Isolée, Dj Koze, Hndson Mohawke, Etienne Jaumet, Prosumer, Dominique Leone and more. Toulouse various venues, 25–28 June. €30/festival pass, les-siestes-electroniques.com

Sónar Spain
A festival synonymous with summer end supported by *The Wire*, returns for another weekend celebrating music end digital arts. This year's programme includes Orbital, Grace Jones, alva noto, DJ Mnjava & MC Mzuri, Moderat, Joker, Byetone, Martyn, Marcel Dettmann, Bullion, The Gaslamp Killer, Konono No1, snd, Atom™, Malatu Astatke & The Heliocentrics, Vincent Gello presents RRIICCEE, Carl Craig, Luomo, Jeff Mills, Omar Souleyman, James Murphy & Pat Mahoney, Bomb Squad, Ben Frost and more. Plus an exhibition of musical instruments created using robotics end a new SónerKids day of activities related to music end art (21 June). Barcelone various venues, 18–20 June. €140/festivel pass. sonar.es

Suoni Per Il Popolo Canada
Almost a month of concerts with line-ups including Sir Richard Bishop, Nomeansno, Arrington de Dionyso, Tom Carter, Michael Gira, Martin Schmidt & Jason Willet, Sick Lleme, Peul Metzger, Climax Golden Twins, Mika Miko end more. Montréal Casa del Popolo & La Sala Rossa, 3–30 June, suoniperilpopolo.org

Taktlee Switzerland
Improv end more with Zeitkratzer, Taylor Ho Bynum Sextet, Christian Wallumrød Ensemble, Shirley Anne Hofmann, Guus Janssen, Archetti/Wiget, Eco d Albeni, Shirley Anne Hofmann and Lucas Niggli & Xu Fengxia. Zurich Rote Fabrik, 5–7 June. taktlos.com

Vancouver International Jazz Canada
With Mats Gustafsson/François Houle Ensemble, Taylor Ho Bynum Trio, Alex von Schlippenbach, Dörner/Mahal/Müller/van der Schyff, Trio M, Delirium and more. Vancouver various venues, 26 June–5 July, coastaljazz.ca

Vision USA
Annual celebration of jazz end more spread over 50 events including music and dence performences, poetry readings, visuels and panel discussions. The line-up includes Billy Bang, Milford Graves, Peter Brötzmann, Marshall Allen and The Sun Ra Arkestra, David S Were, Charles Gayle, Joe McPhee, Butch Morris, Wil·em Parker, Sunny Murray, Matthew Shipp end more. New York various venues, 9–15 June, visionfestival.org

Volt Sweden
First edition of this festival for electronic music featuring GAS, Cassy, Oeda Life, Tomas Andersson, Mokira and more, plus the world's first orchestra of anelogue synthesizers performing a special commission by conductor Erik Möller, who will control the main tempo with a Roland TR-808 and a control voltage clock output. Uppsala Konsert & Kongress, 6 June, voltfestivalen.se

Straight outta Congo: Konono No 1 whoop it up at Sónar

Mark E Smith in talk mode

Roaming balladeer Alasdair Roberts

Special Events

Cornelius Cardew And The Freedom Of Listening France
An exhibition of archives, photographs, scores, sound recordings and films, plus a series of concerts retracing the career of the English composer. June sees *Tiger's Mind* with Nadia Lichtig/Nina Canal/Michael Morley/Sarah Stephenson, *Viola Solo* with Rhys Chatham, *Treatise* (extract) with Marcus Schmickler/Samon Takahashi/Michel Guillet/Jean Jacques Palix (7 June), and *Meditation On Wage Labor And The Death Of The Album* with Terre Thaemlitz (22). Bretigny Centre d'Art Contemporain to 27 June. cacbretigny.com/inhalt/cardew.html

Cleveland Museum Of Art Summer Solstice Party USA
Celebrating the opening of CMA's new wing with a musical celebration and late night party with Hot Club Of Detroit, Balloon Bass Trio (balloon twister Addi Somekh on balloon bass with multi-instrumentalist Ralph Carney and drummer Kenny Wollesen), Slavic Soul Party!, Ohio sound artists Jeremy Bible & Jason Henry, Dan Deacon, DJ Rekha, Emeralds and Dente Cerfagne (of Eccentric Soul) spinning lost Cleveland soul and R&B singles from the 1960s and 70s through the night. Cleveland Museum Of Art, 20 June, 7pm, $15 from 10pm. clevelandart.org

Miles Davis UK
An exhibition of paintings and drawings by the late trumpeter, never previously seen on the art circuit. London Exchange Court Gallery, 1–6 June

A Few Left Traces UK
Evening of collaborations with Neil Carver, Ben Gwilliam, Tomas Korber, Helmut Lemke, Lee Patterson, Matt Wand and Heiner Woermann. University of Selford Chapman Gallery, 18 May–5 June. arts.salford.ac.uk

Iain Forsyth & Jane Pollard UK
The artists premiere video installation *Radio Mania: An Abandoned Work*, a contemporary adaptation with soundtrack by Barry Adamson of one of the first ever 3D films, *The Man From MARS* (aka *Radio Mania* in its 2D version). London BFI Southbank Gallery, to 11 July. free. bfi.org.uk/gallery

Luke Fowler UK
The film maker receives the first major survey of his work. Fowler uses a cinematic and unconventional approach to biographichal and documentary film making. Included in the show is his film about Cornelius Cardew, *Pilgrimage From Scattered Points* (2006), as well as a new work made in collaboration with sound artist Toshiya Tsunoda. London Serpentine, to 14 June. serpentinegallery.org

Lemi Ghericke wu UK
Self-taught painter and designer whose work adorned nearly 30 of Fela Kuti's albums gets his own exhibition documenting his role in the Afrobeat phenomenon. London Rich Mix, 8 June–8 July. free, richmix.org.uk

Julien House UK
The New Spirit Happening, first visual art exhibition by the co-founder of Ghost Box Records and acclaimed graphic designer, featuring films, screenprints and collected ephemera. Stirling The Changing Room, to 6 June. stirling.gov.uk/changingroom

Ryoji Ikeda Japan
The artist's largest solo exhibition to date, +/– [the infinite between 0 and 1]. Tokyo Museum of Contemporary Art, to 21 June. ryojiikeda.mot-art-museum.jp

Invasion of Sound Poland
An exhibition on the relations between music and the visual arts featuring paintings, installations and videos by Marina Abramovic, Jeremy Deller, Rodney Graham, Christien Marcley, Ann Sale and more. Warsaw Zecheta Narodowa Galeria Sztuki, to 14 June. zecheta.art.pl

Paolo Inverni Germany
First solo show, Paths, for the Italian artist, exploring the intersection between music and environmental sounds. Berlin Galerie Mario Mazzoli, 5 June–20 July. galeriemazzoli.com

Olga Neuwirth Austria
The Austrian composer presents multi-channel sound piece *Travelling Through The Zones In-Between* as the latest in the ongoing series of sound art in a dedicated space. Vienna Tonspur, to 28 June. tonspur.at

Pathways To Unknown Worlds USA
An exhibition subtitled Sun Ra, El Saturn And Chicago's Afro-Futurist Underground 1954–1968 presents a collection, most of which is going on public display for the first time, of paintings, drawings, prints, manuscripts, ephemera and video produced by and about Ra and his associates. Plus talks, screenings and performances, including The Sun Ra Arkestra under the direction of Marshall Allen (1 July, 8pm). Philadelphia Institute of Contemporary Art, to 2 August. icaphila.org

A Ritual For Elephant & Castle UK
Performance and ritual inspired by the changes in London's Elephant & Castle area with a live collaboration between Chrome Hoof and artist Marcus Coates, Wildbirds & Peacedrums with a 20-piece drum circle and more plus DJs and visuals by Rod Maclachlan. London Coronet, 5 June, 7pm, £8. nomad.org.uk

Rock-Paper-Scissors Germany
"Music As Subject Of Visual Art" is the subtitle of this exhibition curated by writer Diedrich Diedrichsen. It includes work by Kim Gordon & Jutta Koether, Cory Archangel, Art & Language with The Red Crayola, Sam Durant, Renee Green, Nico Vascellari and others. Graz Kunsthaus, 6 June–6 September. kunsthausgraz.at

Mark E Smith UK
A conversation about life, work, writers, writing and his autobiography *Renegade: The Lives And Tales Of Mark E Smith* between the hip priest and The Huddersfield Literature Festival director Michael Stewart. Huddersfield Lawrence Batley Theatre, 14 June, 7:30pm, £8/£6. litfest.org.uk

20 Years Of Publishing The Avant-Garde USA
Damon and Naomi's Exact Change publishing house celebrates its 20th anniversary with this event, supported by *The Wire*, where musicians will respond in sound to Exact Change texts. Featuring Joan La Barbara (Joseph Cornell's *Dreams*), Loren Connors (Franz Katka's *Blue Octavo Notebooks*), Alan Licht (*Album Exact Change*), Till By Turning/Emily Manzo (Morton Feldman's *Give My Regards To Eighth Street*) and Alex Waterman (Stefan Themerson's *Cardinal Polatuo*). Plus readings of Exact Change texts by Barbara Epler of New Directions, James Hoff of Primary Information, Kenneth Goldsmith of Ubuweb and Damon Krukowski and Naomi Yang. New York ISSUE Project Room, 23 June, 8pm, $10. exactchange.com

27 Senses Norway
An exhibition based on the life and work of Kurt Schwitters and his time living in Norway during his exile from Germany in the 1930s. Participating artists include Kenneth Goldsmith (founding editor of Ubuweb), CM von Hausswolff, Karl Holmqvist, Jutta Koether and Elne McGeorge. Ålesund Kunstmuseet KUBE, to 27 June. electra-productions.com

We Don't Care About Music Anyway .. France
World premiere screening for a new documentary examining the work of eight Japanese experimental musicians Hiromichi Sakemoto, Otomo Yoshihide, Fuyuki Yamakawa, L?K?O, Numb, Saidrum, Umi No Yeehil and Kirihito. Paris Maison de la Culture du Japon, 27 June, 7pm, €4. shaiprod.com

La Monte Young & Marian Zazeela Germany
The Dream House environment is realised in Germany, plus screenings of footage of Young, Zazeela and The Just Alap Raga Ensemble performing *05 II 05 PM NYC* (Saturdays, 3–5:30pm) and of Young performing *The Well-Tuned Piano In The Magenta Lights* (Sundays, 1–7:30pm). The adjacent gallery features Zazeela's *The Fine Line Group* series of drawings. Weilheim Kunst Im Regenbogenstadl, to 24 October. regenbogenstadl.de

On Stage

Æthenor
Additional dates outside of their Equinox appearance for the shared side project of Daniel O'Sullivan, Stephen O'Malley and

Kevin Cummings (Smith)

Joan La Barbara in London

Talibam! at Café OTO

Vincent de Roguin Birmingham Hare & Hounds (13 June), Bristol The Croft (15)

Sophie Agnel/Phil Minton/Roger Turner
The French 'inside piano' improvisor meets the UK vocalist and percussionist London Vortex, 3 June, 8.30pm, £8

Antony & The Johnsons
UK tour supporting *The Crying Light*. Brighton Dome (21 May), Birmingham Symphony Hall (22), Bristol Colston Hall (24), London Hammersmith Apollo (27), Gateshead The Sage (29), Belfast Waterfront (1 June), Edinburgh Playhouse (4)

Joan La Barbara
A rare opportunity to hear the composer, sound artist and extended vocalist performing a selection of her works. London ICA, 31 May, 4pm, free

Andi Cheppie
Site-specific acoustic performances incorporating digital processing. Sedbergh Queen's Gardens (7 June, 7pm, free), Sedbergh St. Gregory's Vale Of Lune Church (17, 7.30pm, £5)

Deerhoof
San Franciscan pop-bending art rock. Leeds TJ's Woodhouse Club (28 June), Manchester The Deaf Institute (29), London Scala (1 July), Brighton Concorde 2 (2)

Bertrand Gauguet/Frederic Blondy/John Butcher/Roger Turner
A quartet performance and two duets in this Franco-Anglo improv meeting. London Cafe Oto, 4 June, 8pm, £6

A Hawk And A Hacksaw
The duo expand to a full band to support new album *Délivrance*. Brighton Duke Of York (16 June), Bristol Fiddlers (17), London Cecil Sharp House (18), Gateshead Baltic (with The One Ensemble + Cath & Phil Tyler, 19), Stirling Tolbooth (20), Glasgow The Arches (21), Manchester Ruby Lounge (22), Birmingham Hare & Hounds (23), Oxford Holywell Music Room (24), Norwich Arts Centre (25)

Mike Hurley & Paul Hession
Free Improv piano and drums duo. Leeds Seven Artspace (12 June), Newcastle Bridge Hotel (13), Edinburgh Canon's Gate (14), Birmingham Lamp Tavern (22), Cardiff Dempsey's (23), Brighton Open House (24), London Lune Lounge (25), Sheffield Over The Top (28)

Led Bib
Hard edged jazz previewing their new album *Sensible Shoes*. London Vortex, 24 June, £8

Jerbne
Former Swans vocalist outside of her Supersonic appearance plus support from Esoteric and Rose Kemp. London Underworld, 20 June, £12

Manuel Mota + Norberto Lobo
Double bill of Portuguese guitarists. London Cafe Oto, 24 June, 7.30pm, £5

Phill Niblock
Intimate performance from the minimalist composer. London Cafe Oto, 24 May, 8pm

Outhouse & Hillmer Jenssen
North London LOOP Collective alumni team up with the Icelandic guitarist for a one-off project. London Vortex, 14 June, £8

Oxford Improvisers
New groupings drawn from the members of Ol' Chris Brown & Bruno Guastalla, Jill Elliott/Bruno Guastalla/Chris Stubbs, Electronic Quartet (9 June), John Grieve/Julian Faultless/Martin Hackett and Pat Thomas/David Stent/Dominic Lash/Roger Telford (14 July). Oxford Folly Bridge Inn, 8.30pm, £6/£4

Pocabounted + Sun Araw
Double bill of Not Not Fun psych tribal weirdness. Dublin tbc (13 June), Belfast The Menagerie (14), Glasgow tba (15), Cambridge tba (16), Manchester Islington Mill (17), Sheffield The Red House (with Burial Hex, 18), Nottingham Chameleon (19), London Luminaire (20)

Psykick Dancehall
Documenting the UK free music underground with Blood Stereo, The Hunter Gracchus, Jazzfinger and Towering Breaker. Glasgow CCA, 13 June, 8pm, £5

Aleedeir Roberts
The Scottish balladeer supports new Domino album *Spoils*. Aberdeen Tunnels (21 May), Edinburgh Caberet Voltaire (22), Liverpool Leaf Tea Room (23), Manchester Dulcimer (24), Hebden Bridge Trades Club (25), Leeds Library (26), Brighton Freebutt (27), London Bush Hall (28), Bristol Louisiana (29), Glasgow Stereo (5 June), London The Local (19), Leicester Big Session (20)

Talibam!
American punk Improv duo plus support from Alan Wilkinson and The Alex Ward Group. London Cafe Oto, 9 June, 8.30pm, £5

Tenniscoats
The Japanese underground catalysts celebrate song at London Cafe Oto (1 June), Bristol Cube (2), Birminghem The Flapper (3), Glasgow Mono (5), London Cafe Oto (6), Brighton Prince Albert (7)

TITS
San Francisco quartet of female doom-pop bewitchment. Brighton Cowley Club (13 June), Cardiff Buffalo Bar (14), Manchester tba (15), Glasgow 13th Note (16), Sheffield tba (17), London Barden's Boudoir (18)

Trevor Watts & Peter Knight
The duo of Steeleye Span's violinist and saxophonist Watts reunite as part of Leigh Folk Festival. Leigh On Sea St Clements Church, 27 June, 7pm, donations accepted

Club Spaces

100% Dynamite
London's beloved reggae, dancehall, funk and soul session returns with hosts the Soul Jazz Sound System. London Cafe 1001, 14 June (second Sundays monthly), 3pm, free, souljazzrecords.co.uk

Bleep43
Electronic music irregular with a four hour set from Omar S plus Donato Dozzy, Plant43, Orphan and Bleep43 residents. London Corsica Studios, 12 June, 10pm, £15/£12, bleep43.com/events

Boat-Ting
Regular Improv and poetry club on a boat on the Thames. With Steve Noble/Lol Coxhill/John Edwards, Sharon Gal/Steve Beresford/Moshi Honen, Javier Carmona & Ollie Brice (1 June), Lol Coxhill/Mark Sanders/Steve Beresford, Kay Grant & Alex Ward, Sound Of The Sun (15). London Bar & Co, every first and third Monday, 8pm, £6/£4, 020 8659 3406, boat-ting.com

FIZZLE
Regular Improv with The Rick Jensen Trio (9 June) and Mike Hurley & Paul Hession (22). Birmingham Lamp Tavern, 8.45pm, £5/£3, myspace.com/improvisationbirmingham

Flim Flam
Alan Wilkinson's regular night of Improv with One King Poets, Gus Garside & Dan Powell (17 June), Mouth, Alan Wilkinson/Ollie Brice/Javier Carmona (24), London Ryan's, 8.30pm, last two Wednesdays monthly, £6/£4

Klinker Kings Crass
London free music institution goes central. With Dave Fitzgerald's Clifftop Musical Theatre (Klinker Club Unplugged, 4 June), Small Faeces, Matt Scott's Squeeze Box Juke Box (18), London Cross Kings, first and third Thursdays monthly, 9pm, £5/£3, klinkerzoundz.com

Klinker South
The Klinker below the river, with Martin Hackett/Richard Sanderson/Paul Hood, Hog Calling, Carpet Sniffer and Amy Kohn. London Ivy House, 3 June (first Wednesday monthly), 8.30pm, £5/£3, klinkerzoundz.com

Klinker Tottenham
Klinker's North London outpost. With Taeko Kunishim/Clive Bell/Max Hallett with film accompaniment by Hugh Metcalfe, Rude Mechanicals (2 June), Ricardo Tejero/Nick Stephens/Tony Marsh (9), "A Night Of Live Poultry" poetry night (16), Chris Biscoe & Paul Clervis (23), Frank Bangey & Tunde Bnsent, DJ Hugh Metcalfe (26), Meat Sweats, Ruby Bird/Clem Bird/Stephen Dawson (30). London Tottenham Chances, every Tuesday plus second and fourth Fridays monthly, 8.30pm, £5/£3, klinkerzoundz.com

London Jazz Orchestra
Monthly residency for the collective playing their own compositions and recorded for

Mark Mahaney (La Barbara) Lisa Kyoko Smith (Talibam!)

release as part of the LJO's *Vortex Sessions* June's event also sees them perform Coltrane's *Africa Brass* with members of the London Philharmonic Orchestra London Vortex, 7 June, 4pm, £8/£6, vortexjazz.co.uk

Mopomoso
Monthly improv staple with Phil Minton's Feral Choir, Tania Chen/Shabak Hutchings/Seb Rochford, Forgiving July John Butcher/Dominic Lash/John Russell. With a free Feral Choir workshop led by Minton (2pm, booking necessary). London Vortex, 21 June (third Sunday monthly), 8pm, £7/£4, mopomoso.com

On The Edge
Improvised and leftfield music with Mike Hurley & Paul Hession, Dan Powell & Gus Garside and The Wildcard Quartet. Brighton Open House Pub, 24 June (last Wednesday monthly), 8.30pm, £6/£5, myspace.com/safehousebrighton

Evan Parker Presents
The leading UK saxophonist and his hand-picked cast of players this time John Edwards and Tony Marsh. London Vortex, 25 June, 8pm, £8/£6, vortexjazz.co.uk

Reclusa
Monthly electroacoustic night with Burning Zoo and Alex Monk plus visuals and DJs. London Flea Pit, 4 June, 8pm, £3, recluse01.com

Spirit Of Gravity
Electronic and leftfield music with Animal Magic Tricks, Monster Bobby and Hoofus. Hosted by Laptop Lee Hume. Brighton Komedia Studio Bar, 11 June, 8.30pm, £5/£4, spiritofgravity.com

This Is Tuesday
Weekly series of events for the musically curious: each week is programmed by different leftfield promoters and musicians. With This Isn't For You (2 June), The Sound Source, Plundering Žižek and Silent Disco (9). London Kings Place, every Tuesday, 8pm, £9.50, kingsplace.co.uk

Under_Scora
Techno-plus monthly with Rob Hall and Gilbatron plus residents Jim Patharwick and Luke Malcher. Bristol The Tube, 6 June (first Saturday monthly), 10pm, £5, underscoremusic.co.uk

Incoming

All Tomorrow's Parties: New York USA
The holiday camp festival in their US home this time curated by The Flaming Lips and ATP presenting Boredoms performing BOREORUM 2009, Deerhoof, Animal Collective, The Jesus Lizard, Panda Bear, Melvins, Dirty Three, Suicide, Black Dice, El-P, Akron Family, Antipop Consortium, Dead Meadow, David Cross and more. Monticello Kutshers Country Club, 11–13 September, $235/festival pass only, atpfestival.com

Apolla UK
The premiere of a new arrangement by Icebreaker of Brian Eno's album *Apollo*, celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Apollo XI moon landing. Plus support from Douglas Benford and Iris Garrelfs. London Science Museum, 20 & 21 July, sciencemuseum.org.uk

Architectones France
Round tables, installations and concerts on the theme of sound and architecture featuring Ravi Ganchrow, Colin Ripley, Claudia Martinho, *The Wire*'s Rahma Khazam, Seth Cluett, CRESSON, Edwin van der Heide, Thomas Ankersmit, Phill Niblock and more. Arc et Senans Royal Saltworks, 3–5 July, architectones.net

Harrison Birtwistle UK
A fully staged music theatre double bill of new works *Semper Dowland* and *The Corridor*. London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 6 & 7 July, 7.30pm, £22–£9

Green Man UK
Gentael outdoor festival of folk and more taking place beneath the Welsh Black Mountains. With Animal Collective, Roky Erickson, Four Tet, Dirty Three, Vetiver, Wilco, Wooden Shjips, Jarvis Cocker, Trembling Bells and more. Brecon Beacons, Glanusk Park, 21–23 August, £115/festival pass, thegreenmanfestival.co.uk

Jazz À Luz France
Contemporary jazz and more in the Pyrenees with Noël Akchoté, Roger Turner/John Russell/Michel Doneda, Barre Phillips & Keiji Haino, Akosh S & Joëlle Léandre and more. Luz Saint Sauveur various venues, 10–13 July, €55/festival pass, jazzaluz.com

Jazz Em Agosto Portugal
Ten concerts over six days for the 26th annual event hosted by the Gulbenkian Foundation. With George Lewis Sequel, Nublu Orchestra conducted by Butch Morris, Dave Douglas & Bress Ecstasy, Peter Evans, Buffalo Collision featuring Tim Berne, Franziska Baumann & Matthias Ziegler, Bill Orcon with Exploding Star Orchestra and more. Plus a lecture by Lewis and documentary screenings. Lisbon Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1– 2, 6–9 August, musica.gulbenkian.pt/jazz

Jazzfestival Saalfelden Austria
30th anniversary event with confirmed artists including Ornette Coleman, Oliver Lake Trio and The Ex. Saalfelden various venues, 27–30 August, jazzsaalfelden.com

Klanghad Germany
Outdoor festival supported by *The Wire*, taking place in a small village on the Danube. With Pram, Dälek, To Rococo Rot, Burnt Friedman & Jaki Liebezeit, Oiater Moebius, The Nightingales, Christy & Emily Laârass8anda, Oragibus, Nufe, DJ Marcella and DJ Fett. Schear park, 7–9 August, klangbadfestival-scheer.de

Manchester International Festival UK
The city's wide-ranging festival programme includes Kraftwerk, Steve Reich, Antony & The Johnsons with Manchester Camerata, Gustav Metzger's Flailing Trees, Laurie Anderson & Lou Reed, De La Soul, Ourutti Columu and more. Mauchestar various venues, 2–19 July, times/prices vary, mif.co.uk

Météa France
The festival formerly known as Jazz à Mulhouse gets a makeover but holds its interest in improvisation, rock, jazz and more. Artists include Chris Corsano, Fred Frith, Jozef van Wissem, Francisco Lopez, Andy Moor, Lionel Marchetti, eRikm, DJ /rupture, Paul Flaherty, Yannis Kyriakides, Wally Shoup and more. Mulhouse various venues, 13–29 August, festival-meteo.fr

The Suffolk Symphony: Touch UK
The Touch team create an audio-visual symphony using only sounds and images sourced from the coastline of Aldeburgh and its surrounding area. Sound provided by Philip Jeck and BJ Nilsen will be orchestrated by Mike Harding, image by Jon Wozencroft. Snape Maltings Building, 22 August, 8pm, £10, fasterthensound.com

Supersonic UK
Return of the Mblends' celebration of the loud and weird, with Goblin, Head Of David, Jarboe, Growing, Zu, Flower-Corsano Duo, Earthless, Skullflower, Scorn, Iron Lung, Pontiak, Nancy Wallace, Venetian Snares, Diagnol, Pram, Caribou and more. Birmingham Custard Factory, 24–26 July, capsule.org.uk/supersonic

13 Most Beautiful... Songs For Andy Warhol's Screen Tests UK
UK premiere of the screening of 13 of Warhol's four-minute silent film portraits of the likes of Lou Reed, Dennis Hopper, Edie Sedgwick, Nico and more, individually soundtracked live by former Galaxie 500 guitarist Dean Wareham and Britta Phillips. Dunfermline Carnegie Hall, 8 July, £18/£13, attfife.org.uk

Wilco UK
One UK date outside of their Green Man appearance in support of their new release *Wilco (The Album)*. London Troxy, 25 August, 7.30, £25

Out There items for inclusion in the July issue should reach us by Friday 22 May. Send info to: Listings, *The Wire*, 23 Jack's Place, 6 Corbet Place, London E1 6NN, UK. Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011. Email: listings@thewire.co.uk

***The Wire* presents Adventures In Modern Music**
Resonance 104.4 FM

The Wire's weekly show on the UK's only community arts radio station is broadcast across Central London on 104.4 FM every Thursday between 9–10.30pm, with simultaneous streaming at resonancefm.com. All editions of the show, complete with guest mixes, are archived at thewire.co.uk a few days after their initial broadcast.

WIRE
Resonance104.4fm

Back Issues

The Wire has been publishing since 1982. Over 150 different editions of the magazine from this period are still available as back issues (the rest are sold out)
For full details go to thewire.co.uk/issues

The Wire Tapper

The Wire Tapper is a unique and ongoing series of CDs that are compiled by *The Wire* staff and given away to all readers with selected issues of the magazine. Each CD functions as an accompaniment to the kind of wide ranging mix of new underground music that gets featured in the magazine each month. Vols 1–5 and 7, 8, 11 and 13–21 are single CDs. Vols 6, 9, 10 and 12 are double CDs.

Copies of previous volumes in *The Wire Tapper* series are available when ordering the relevant back issue

Go to thewire.co.uk/subscribe for details

The Wire Tapper 1 **Issue 170 April 1998**
Vega/Venic/Vaisanen, Mass, Maximaster, Mike, si-[cut], db, Vs Scanner, Scale, Cornelius, Readelus, Nassim Maalouf, Solex, Kreidler, DJ Food, Vs David Byrne, Arto Lindsay, Schneider TM, Porter Ricks, Midnight Funk Association, Mimi, 2nd Gen

The Wire Tapper 2 **Issue 177 November 1998**
Slicker, Rhys Chatham, Angela Jaeger & David Cunningham, DAF, Tom Ze, Merzbow, (Percy Howard/Fred Frith/Bill Laswell/Charles Hayward), Jane Dowe & Terre Thaemlitz, Terwater, Powerfield, Sam Prekop, Puppy, Jed Fair & Ye Le Tenge, The Pastels, Badawi, Lebradford

The Wire Tapper 3 **Issue 182 April 1999**
Supersilent, High Rise, Rothko, We Gas To Reduce Rot, Thurston Moore/Evan Parker/Walter Prati, Model 500, Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, Khan, Herd, Paul Panhuysen, Robert Ashley, Sheila Chandra, Void, Rhys Chatham

The Wire Tapper 4 **Issue 186 August 1999**
FX Randomiz, Pierre Bastien, and Pan American & DJ Cele Vandermark 5, SS+O, Ming, Powerfield, Low Res, Chief Barnacle & His Sudu Men, Clive Graham, Do Make Say Think, Warn Defever, Signal, Klangefakt Unit, Daniel Figgis

The Wire Tapper 5 **Issue 193 March 2000**
Lebradford, Stephen Vitiello, Valve/Vaisanen/Einholt, Kimmo Pohjonen, Wire, Styles, John Wall, Curd Duca, Fennesz/O'Rourke/Rehberg, I m Sere Vs Neiss Camp, Daniel Givens, Arne Nordheim, Ye La Tenge, Vert, Aesop Quartet, Mira Calix, Fushitsusho

The Wire Tapper 6 **Issue 200 October 2000**
CD1: The Fall, Flanger, Susumu Yokota, Ran Blake, Christian Marclay, Ofomo Yoshihide, Sensational, General Magic, Pan Sonic, Jan Jelinek, pure_z, HIM, David Grubbs, Tris Hurricane+1, Angus MacLise, Glass Cage, CD 2: Nurse With Wound, Faust, John Fahey, Nils Okland, Coil, Janek Schaefer, Current Ninety Three, Djivan Gasparyan, Peanut Butter Wolf featuring Rasco, I-Sound, BitTonic & ei-[cut], db, C-Schulz & Hajsch, Tom Recchion, Pluramon, Harmann Nitsch

The Wire Tapper 7 **Issue 207 May 2001**
Four Tet, Pulseprogramming, Daniel Figgis, Jin Hi Kim, Kim Hiorthoy, Antibalas Afrobeat Orchestra, Bigg Jus, Nolte, Steinbruchel, Mice Parade, Illusion Of Safety, Monks Of The Monastery Of Gyuto, Tibet, Eardrum, Lasse Marhaug, Max Nagl/Edward Grey featuring Julie Tippetts

The Wire Tapper 8 **Issue 215 January 2002**
23 Skidoo, Jah Wobble & Temple Of Sound, Cornelius, Fog, Goethoert, Allen Powell Trio, Chou Smith, Michael Jon Fink, Murcof, Electreliane, No Neck Blues Band, Set Fire To Flames, Workshop, Small Rocks, The Rip-Off Artist, Noxagt, Xiu Supreme

The Wire Tapper 9 **Issue 225 November 2002**
CD1: Liars, Themselves, Terwater, Mum, Badawi, Suicide, Supersilent, Pelwechsel/Fennesz, Wazahugy, Asa-Chang & Junray, Deadbeat, Vedim, The Oxes, Sagan, Lexfcutter John, Sun, CD 2: Max Tundra, Wire, Sonic Youth/ICP/The Ex, Sigur Rós, John Fahey, A Small Good Thing, The Sea And Cake, Masha Qrella, Dictaphone, Pulseprogramming, Electreliane, Ellery Eskelin with Andrea Parkins & Jim Black, Jimmy Lyons Trio, Amon Tobin, D Arcangelo, *Currently unavailable*

The Wire Tapper 10 **Issue 236 October 2003**
CD1: Guido Möbius, Aires, Animal Collective, Mahsi Shelal Heah Baz, Sketch Show, Kim Hiorthoy, Mice Parade, Colleen, Themselves, Loren Connors & David Grubbs, Palmo Polpo, Faust & Oxbow, Four Tet, Rob Ellis, David Sylvian, CD 2: Heat Sensoo featuring M Sayyid, Gunter Muller & Toshimaru Nakamura, Stafraenn Hakon, Schlemmpeitziger, Jah Wobble, Leibach, Lumen, Seteru Were, UI, Erik Friedlander, Susanna And The Magical Band, Clogs, Sagor & Swing, Satanicpornocultshop, David Grubbs

The Wire Tapper 11 **Issue 244 June 2005**
To Rococo Rot, Icarus, Juana Molina, Wibutsu, Philip Clarke, Albert Ayler, Chris McGregor & The Brotherhood Of Breath, Matthew Dear, Jah Wobble, Arthur Russell, Henrik Rylander, Gisen Mik From The Planet Orange Mountains, Slowblow, Un Caddie Renversé Dans L Herbe, pure_z & Phil Minton

The Wire Tapper 12 **Issue 250 December 2005**
CD1: Daniel Bird & Rob Palmer, Githead, Berk Psychosis, Ateleia & David Daniell, Andy Moor & Yannis Kyriakides, Burnt Friedman & The Nu Dub Players, Aesop Rock, Fila, Violet, Michaela Mellán, Chas Smith, Martin Archer, Henry Grimes Trio, The Necks, C Ascaltare, Matthew Burtner, Stéphane Rives, Ergo Phizmiz, The Fall CD 2: Cul De Sac & Dame Suzuki, Meadow House, Milky Globs, Stealpleat Soundsystem, Jason Kahn & Gunter Muller, Andrew Pekler, Carter Tutti, Dj Rupture featuring Sister Nancy, Burnt Sugar Vs The Dominatrix Arn/Pm, David Grubbs & Nikos Veliotis, Gery Lucas & Jozef Van Wissem, Bennie Prince Billy & Matt Sweeney, Deman & Naomi Fax & Alex Ayuli, Ana De Silva, Christien Reneu, Enigma Device, Shining, M Bentley

The Wire Tapper 13 **Issue 256 June 2006**
Hanna Hukkelberg, Mondenn Meve, Alexander Hacke, Matt Elliott, Juana Molina, Pocastra, Devastenista, Kid606, Arnt Pink, Haunted Graffiti, John Surman, Nick Castro, Junkboy, Alonari, Currituck, Cosmbay 1, Pajo, Crimetime Orchestra, Port Royal, Foyss Hex, Tu M

The Wire Tapper 14 **Issue 262 December 2006**
Oren Marshall, Dirty Projectors, Secret Mommy, Cage, Ray Russell, Kieran Hebden & Steve Reid, Black To Comm, Cobra Killer, Gerry Mitchell & Little Sparta, Xul, Merz, Hans Fjellestad, Nale Cline/Wally Shoup/Chris Corsano, Andrew Kirtcheiko, This Heat, Meka

The Wire Tapper 15 **Issue 268 June 2007**
Homcrush, Lexfcutter John, Machinefabriek, Revertaphen, Yannis Kyriakides & Andy Moor, Josef Van Wissem, Hwyl Nofio, Giuseppe Ielasi, Gerritt & John Wiese, Dub Tractor, Izu, Mekon, Lawrence English & Ar Yamamoto, Herbert, Sol Sleepy, Trevor Watts, Gricer, Spearcurve, Janay Dui, Cat Gamia, Landat

The Wire Tapper 16 **Issue 274 December 2007**
Drone Spiderhead, Dave Phillips, Alan Vega, Philip Bimstein, Carter Tutti, reticalfashion, Walter & Sabrina Kela, Kehra & Zavaleka, Panasonic Huntsville, Fluorescent Grey, Derek Bailey, Tullpamela, Dave Swan, eMute, Cellfone, Inch Time, White Magic, The Slits, Anthony Kelly & David Stelling

The Wire Tapper 17 **Issue 278 May 2007**
Eglantine Geuzy, Longstone, A Hawk And A Hacksaw & The Hun Hangár Ensemble, Jonquil, Kammerflimmer Kollektief, Sadun, Van Sudenfed, Pamassi, Throbbing Gristle, Alfred 23 Harth, Fred Andersen & Harrison Bankhead, Fridge, Jack Rose & Glenn Jones, Husky Rescue, Simon Scolish, Venus Engendus, Tenesucker, stimulus, Zellenpole, Ken Ikeda

The Wire Tapper 18 **Issue 284 October 2007**
Automated Acoustics, Strings Of Consciousness, John Luther Adams, hanaYoko, The Focus Group, Cath & Phil Tyler, The Ex & Getatchew Mekuria & Guests, Modified Toy Orchestra, Heinteri Friedl, the fun years, Damon & Naomi, Goodspel, Icarus, Torental, Babile, Luciano Cilio, Hulk, Dimension X, Mordant Music

The Wire Tapper 19 **Issue 290 April 2008**
Our Sleepless Forest, Snorkel, Nico Muhly, G F Fitz Gerald & Lol Coxhill, X A Cute feat. Mike Ladd, Daniel Figgis via Simedrome, Fluorescent Grey, Kaffe Matthews, Alexei Borsavy & Anton Nikolic, Talvin Singh, Illusion Of Safety, The Master Musicians Of Hop-Frog, Phog Mashean, Setsuban Bean Unit, Pink Skull, LawDynamoOrchestra with Stefano Scodanibbio, Lars Akerlund, Tengtype, Yellow8, Never Enough Hope

The Wire Tapper 20 **Issue 296 October 2008**
Mike Osborne, Zavaleka_Grails, Punck, Pantaleimon, microsamsus, Anthony Kelly & David Stelling, Wounded Knee, oRSo, Jarescale, Crackle, Mokel, Fermacatan, Fawcharju, Tertium Quid, A_dentigny, Richard J Yates, Lothar Ohlmeier/Isambard Khrustalev, Random Touch

The Wire Tapper 21 **Issue 302 April 2009**
Robert Logan, Shogun Kunitoki, Jens El Grande, Sweet Billy Pilgrim, Jim McAuley (with Nels Cline), Hogemes, Hogemes, Barbara Morgenstern, Whirling Hall of Knives, Animal Hospital, Violet, Andres Lar, Felix Kubin, Sheik Anorak & Weasel Walter, Dum-Stretefunjunks, Tony Bevan / Chris Corsano / Dominic Lash, Pekka Airaksinen, David Ahlén, Jez riley French, Them Use Them, Laura Toxvaerd, Hitoshi Kojo

Subscriptions

Subscribe online at thewire.co.uk/subscribe tel +44 (0) 20 7422 5022 or mail subs@thewire.co.uk

Print + Digital

£39 UK	£55* EU/US/Can	£65 Rest of World

12 issues + 1 year digital subscription

Save money
Get the benefit of both subscriptions below for only £5 more than a print subscription, saving £37.

This option is available for both new subscriptions and renewals.

*£55 = approx US$88 / €66

Print

£34 UK	£50* EU/US/Can	£60 Rest of World

12 issues for the price of 9

Save money
Get 12 issues of *The Wire* delivered direct to your door, saving £12.60 on the UK shop price of £46.80. Wherever you live, a subscription issue will cost less than if you bought it from a news stand, record store or book shop

Special discounts
All subscribers get discounts on back issues, books, T-shirts, tote bags and other items of official *Wire* merchandise

Prompt delivery
UK 3–5 days
Europe/USA/ROW Air 1–3 weeks

***The Wire Tapper* CDs**
All subscribers worldwide receive future volumes in *The Wire Tapper* series

Extra free CD
This month, all subscribers get a free CD *Exploratory Music From Poland*. See p53

*£50 = approx US$80 / €60

Digital

£29.50

Free Trial
Go to thewire.co.uk/digital to browse a free no-obligation trial issue

1 year digital subscription

Online access to every page of every issue since August 2006

Access each new issue as soon as it is published

Features include:

- High quality printable pdfs
- Fully searchable text
- Interactive contents and index pages
- Hyperlinks from editorial and adverts

Digital subscriptions are hosted by our friends at Exact Editions

NB: Stand-alone digital subscribers don't get copies of *The Wire Tapper* or other free CDs, nor any additional offers and benefits that are available to subscribers to the print edition of the magazine

Each month, to coincide with the publication of another new issue of *The Wire*, the magazine's official website is updated with new and exclusive content, including unedited interview transcripts, MP3s, video clips, competitions and more. Here are just some of the items that will be going up on the site this month:

The full version of **The Caretaker**'s recent mix for the Adventures In Modern Music radio show

An exclusive live recording by **Comus**

Material to tie in with the reissue of Gareth Williams & Mary Currie's ***Fleming Tunes***

Exclusive music by **Arrington de Dionyso**

Music from **Alex Neilson**'s Trembling Bells

Material to tie in with this month's **Equinox** festival

A gallery of previously unseen self-portraits by **Graham Lambkin**

An exclusive audio walkthrough courtesy of **Goodiepal**

The site's regular sections are updated on a daily, weekly or more ad hoc schedule. These include:

The Portal
Updated daily, our pick of the web with guest links from a host of outsider musicians and artists

Adventures In Modern Music
Updated weekly, each edition of *The Wire*'s show on Resonance 104.4 FM is archived on the site as a downloadable MP3 and stream. Recent editions of the show have featured guest mixes from **Ekkehard Ehlers**, **Echospace**, **Hishem Mayet** of **Sublime Frequencies**, plus an interview with **Christian Marclay**

The Archive
Updated monthly: an ever-expanding library of articles culled from back issues of the magazine (many of which are now sold out)

The Mire
Updated whenever we feel like it: *The Wire* has a blog. Point your browsers to thewire.co.uk/themire for some extra-time musings on modern music matters from various staffers and contributors

The Conduit
For updates on what's happening in the online world of *The Wire*, sign up to our fortnightly newsletter, or subscribe to our RSS feeds, both at thewire.co.uk

Jan Stradtmann (The Caretaker), Lucinda Roanoke (Arrington de Dionyso)

NEW RELEASES

VRIL The Fatal Duckpond

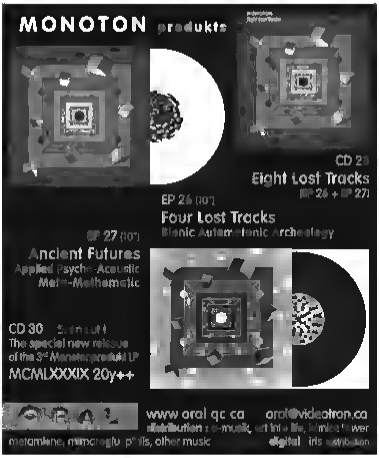
RATIMANDRESY, AREVALOS
Messiaen et autour de Messiaen
for ondes Martenot and piano

HEINER GOEBBELS
The Italian Concerts

BLAST Sift

£10 each

ReR/Recommended, Dept W, 79 Beulah Road,
Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8JG
Credit card hotline: 020 8771 1063
(credit card surcharge 60p)
email: rermegacorp@dial.pipex.com
www.rermegacorp.com



THE SKULL DEFEKTS
THE DRONE DRUG LP (LIM. 500)

PUSSYGUTT
SHE HID BEHIND HER VEIL CD

BLACK BONED ANGEL
THE ENDLESS COMING INTO LIFE CD

THESE RELEASES AVAILABLE FROM ACTUAL NOISE & 20 BUCK SPIN
ACTUALNOISE.NET // 20BUCKSPIN.COM // UK DISTRO VIA FORTE // REVOLVER USA WORLD

AP´STROPHE
"objects sense objectes"

ferran fages
acoustic guitar

dimitra lazaridou-chatzigoga
zither

Limited edition 500 cds

www.etuderecords.com

NEW RELEASE

ASMUS TIETCHENS
EINE MENGE PAPIER

SPECIALLY PRINTED MCD
REISSUE OF SYNTACTIC 7" PLUS THREE UNRELEASED TRACKS
ALL SOUNDS DERIVED FROM PAPER
10 € (EUROPE), 15 € (WORLD)
P&P INCLUDED

aufabwegen
INTERNATIONAL MAILORDER
CONCERT CURATOR IN GERMANY
AUFABWEGEN MAGAZINE
WWW.AUFABWEGEN.COM | AUFABWEGEN P.O.BOX 100 152 50441 COLOGNE

PUMA MARHAUG

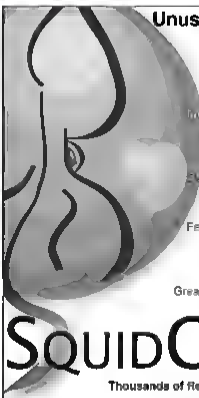
FIST FULL OF KNUCKLES

First release from Lasse Marhaug and power-trio Puma. Noisy/heavy/intense shit from the ugly North.

180 gram LP vinyl-only release in sexy gatefold cover. On Knuckleman Records.

Distributed only by LOOOP:

www.looop.no



Unusual & Experimental Musics

Compact Discs • DVDs • Vinyl
Magazines & Books

Improvisation • Jazz • Downtown NY
Musique Actuelle
European Free Improv
Rock • Progressive • RIO
Electro-Acoustic—Plunder/Sampling
Electronics • Unusual Voice
Spoken Word • Turntablists
Featured Artists Labels & Countries

Simple to Navigate
Mail Order Is Our Only Business
Great Prices & Dedication to the Music
Thousands of Global Customers

SQUIDCO

Thousands of Reissues · Friendly Rapid Service
Fixed Rate Shipping Through the World

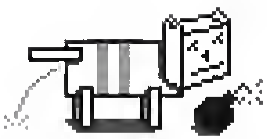
squidco.com

Q
What did Gareth Williams do when he left This Heat?

A
He made some music with Mary Currie and called it

Flaming Tunes

Flaming Tunes gets its first CD release on April 23rd available direct from...
lifeandlivingrecords.com



BOOMKAT.COM

SIXTY NINE MILLIMETRES WIDE

EIGHTY TWO MILLIMETRES HIGH

WIREADV
ERTISING

CONTACT

ANDYORSHANE
+44(0)2074225014
ADS@THEWIRE.CO.UK

STAALPLAAT

New Releases

Artist: Muslimgauze
Title: Sycophant of Purdah
Label: Staalplaat
Format: Cd digipak

Artist: Muslimgauze
Title: Sulaymaniyah
Label: Staalplaat
Format: Cd digipak

staalplaat store, mailorder and distribution for unusual, extreme and avant-garde music, turmstr. 69, 10119 berlin germany
lu-sa 2/7pm www.staalplaat.com / staalplaatstore.blogspot.com

WWW.CRUCIALBLASTSHOP.NET
our all-night online boutique filled with 2700+ titles with a focus on experimental, weird, and mutant heavy music. Handmade limited edition objects are important, out of print items, vinyl, cassette, cloved vinyl, clothing, t-shirt makers and other physical manifestations of mutant heaviness, antique and hard-to-find, with detailed reviews, bi-weekly podcasts, featured bands, and photographs.

CRUCIAL BLAST
WWW.CRUCIALBLAST.NET PO BOX 364 HAGERSTOWN, MD 21741 USA

Celebrating our 25th anniversary!

CUNEIFORM RECORDS
cuneiformrecords.com visit our online store: www.wayside music.com

LED BIB
Sensible Shoes

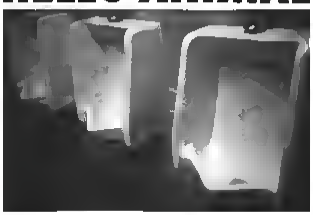
Sensible Shoes is a cataclysmic offering of jazz-rock, free-jazz avant-skronk, funk-rock, art-noise and whatever else they can lay their hands on. The band has impressed aficionados of forward thinking electric jazz with their impressive and muscular dual sax topped Fender Rhodes-driven music. This new album is a culmination of two years of heavy touring since the release of their last album and all of that work definitely shows! A band who have already done great things and are destined for more of the same, but with extra sauce, please

"We need bands like Led Bib to make the world safe for dangerous music." — *Observer Music Monthly*

Gritty, raunchy jazz from a group who deserve to be checked out." — *The Wire*

Distributed by SHELLSHOCK in the UK

BARACLOUGH
HELLO ANIMAL



A DEBUT ALBUM
WWW.BARACLOUGH.CO.UK

Boring Machines
boringmachines.it

LUMINANCE RATIO
BE MALEDETTO NOW!
BEATRICE MARTINI
ABOVE THE TREES
MOROSE
FUZZ ORCHESTRA
FATHER MURPHY
PUNCK
BE INVISIBLE NOW! vs EXPO'70
WHISPERS FOR WOLVES
BOB CORN
SATAN IS MY BROTHER
BE INVISIBLE NOW!
MY DEAR KILLER

Out Now

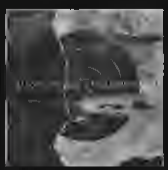
Takahiro Kawaguchi / Shinjiro Yamaguchi
Hello
(FTARRI-888)
Takahiro Kawaguchi tuning fork
Shinjiro Yamaguchi guitar

Naoaki Miyamoto
Me no Tawamure
(HITORRI-888)
Naoaki Miyamoto guitar feedback

Limited editions of 500
In miniature LP covers

www.ftarri.com

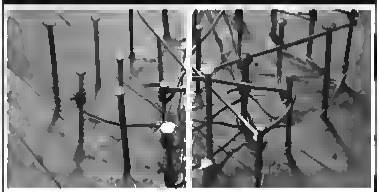
Glass



www.misanthropicagenda.com

Visit our website for mailorder information and complete catalog.
Distribution: Revolver (US), Conspiracy (Europe), Second Layer (UK)

ABREAKTOR



ANY DAY NOW AND
CD (5 track EP)

TERCE
10" Single

„(I) like the subtle Pizzicato sounds. These 5 songs make for a diverse and cohesive EP - you definitly got your own sound." Piedra del Sol

www.brigade-music.com

Epiphanies

At a concert performance of Ligeti's otherworldly *Requiem*, Erik Davis finds his entire body turning into an ear

I'm not sure if it's all the time I used to spend in zendos, but when I find myself in a modern American symphony hall, I usually treat these highly coded and uptight environments as an invitation to focused attention. Once everybody shuts up and the music starts, I sit as still as possible, sans the usual pint, and devote myself to listening, with mind and heart in as much sync as I can muster. This attitude, which can often be as worthwhile as the music itself, really comes in handy when the pieces performed are not the usual warhorses, but the sort of 'challenging' and unfamiliar modern and contemporary works I can appreciate in recordings but often find tough to engage with while I am writing or puttering around the house.

And so it was that I settled with rapt passivity into my orchestra seat for The San Francisco Symphony's first performance of Ligeti's monstrous 1965 *Requiem* earlier this year. After a tasty Baroque bonbon conducted by the Symphony Chorus director Ragnar Bohlin, Michael Tilson Thomas took the tiller, offered a few words of gentle warning, quoted Rilke, and dove into 25 minutes of supreme apocalyptic weirdness.

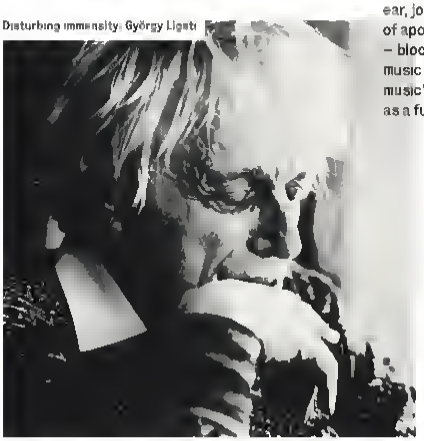
Said to be partly inspired by the composer's own reactions to the Holocaust, during which his entire family save his mother was killed, Ligeti's Dey of Wrath melts historical horror into an underworld of universal and sometimes impish dread. The ominous drift of the opening "Introitus", with some Gyüto monk-worthy growling from the basses, soon splintered like some shuddering ice crystal planet into the mountainous chromatic clouds of the "Kyrie". Twisted into skeins of galactic dust, the massed human voices became a fractal dance of dissolution and dynamic crystallisation, the perpetual solve et coagula of Ligeti's justly celebrated micropolyphony. The fluctuating lines and hair-splitting intervals that make up the music's 20 separate contrapuntal parts transformed the hall with an organic underworld of half congealed aethyrs, so tricksy and difficult for the chorus to pull off that a number of singers sported tuning forks.

I am not the most intellectual or analytic listener. Whenever the opportunity affords itself, I go for transport. Give me a keening emotion, an exotic evocation, an entrancing drone, a psychedelic arabesque, and I am outta here. Within minutes, the disturbing immensity of Ligeti's soundworld lifted me out of my seat. As the usual Cartesian coordinates of melody, harmony and pitch became lost in a chromatic atmosphere at once iridescent and opaque, all familiar reference points – the concert hall, the singers, the city beyond – seemed to melt into a claustrophobic and towering soundscape against the frightening backdrop of Pascal's infinite spaces. Even the hair on the back of my neck came to attention, and I submitted to an ominous undertow of awe.

Somewhere during the "Kyrie" this transport became epiphany, a far rarer occurence in my lexicon of listening. Instead of acting as a drug or a dreamlike trance, the *Requiem* became a mirror of the act of listening itself. Music melted into sound, sound into an almost tactile polyverse of now now now. The hall became a stage where the self that witnesses the waveforms of musical material realises its own identity as a wave of vibration. My whole body became an ear, jolts of energy tickled my spine, and the rhetoric of apocalypse – which means, of course, *revelation* – bloomed into a stark and impersonal unveiling of music as such – not the abstraction of 'absolute music', but the luminous roar of organised sound as a fundamental dimension of reality. This got me so tripped out that, when the hotshot Argentine pianist Martha Argerich took on Ravel's G major piano concerto after the intermission, I could barely relate. The piece was sparkling, her playing was rich with confidence and wit, and the crowd was in love, far more than they had been with Ligeti. But the music sounded to me like a Wurlitzer organ cranking away in a carnival as the aftershocks of some stellar catastrophe faded in the far atmosphere.

Reflecting on this experience later on, I realised that my epiphany could be boiled down to the simple Pavlovian fact that, like millions of earthlinks, I first encountered Ligeti's eerie choral micropolyphony in the film *2001: A Space Odyssey*. A passage of Ligeti's "Kyrie" is associated with the inky black monolith whose appearance heralds and may actually trigger breakthroughs in human consciousness. Coupled with Kubrick's images of chilly sublimity, Ligeti's sounds become another sort of extraterrestrial artefact: a literally otherworldly chorus composed equally of angels and aliens. Ligeti, of course, did not especially care for this exposure, and he also spent six years trying to prise some compensation out of MGM for their unauthorised use of his music. Nonetheless, Kubrick's appropriation can only be seen as a kindness of mutual infection. The film not only exposed millions of people to real-deal experimental music – in effect squeezing pop exoticism out of a product of the intellectual elite – but also trained the minds of moviegoers like me to map the more obvious imaginative transports of visual media onto the incorporeal vectors of intensely novel music.

A pop fusion of 'cosmic' sounds and images all too often becomes a kind of kitsch, from New Age poofery to space-age bachelor pad soundtracks to the comic-book pulp of 197Ds Prog. But this cartoon excess should not obscure the subtler ways in which Ligeti's *Requiem* engages the extraterrestrial imagination, and that can account, beyond the monolith association, for its enormous evocative power. Ligeti himself often used spatial metaphors to describe his work, almost as if we are forced to imagine the kind of parallel world capable of housing such music. We are impelled by imaginative necessity to speak of masses, crystals, tapestries, fractals. Discussing the way his rigorous contrapuntal structure is submerged inaudibly in his music, Ligeti himself spoke of the "very densely woven cobweb" of his choral writing. In the manner of the imagination, this image triggers another – a childhood dream in which Ligeti finds himself entangled in a giant web, along with various insects and decaying pieces of junk. In the dream, he became a captive witness to the gradual transformation of what Philip K Dick would recognise as the 'tomb world', as the insects struggled to free themselves from the perpetually shifting web, like human voices that wake us as we drown. ☐ Erik Davis talks on "A Brief History Of The Phantasm" at London's Equinox Festival this month; see Out There. techgnosis.com



Disturbing immensity: György Ligeti

The Wire tote bag and limited edition T-shirt

The Wire tote bag is made from heavy duty black canvas and comes complete with an original design by our very own Savage Pencil. Meanwhile, *The Wire* T-shirt still comes in two styles: a standard black shirt printed with *The Wire* logo, and a series of limited edition shirts featuring specially commissioned designs by a variety of underground artists, musicians, designers and organisations. These special edition T-shirts are printed in limited runs of just 100 shirts each. Once these have been sold, that's it, they won't be reprinted.

For details of prices sizes and how to order go to thewire.co.uk/shop

The Wire tote bag

An original design by Savage Pencil on a heavy duty canvas cotton tote bag, perfect for carrying records, books, etc. Printed in white on a black bag.

Price (including postage and packing): £12 for UK, £14 elsewhere. Subscriber discount: £2 off per bag

Jeff Jank *Hookie Robot*

A new piece of artwork by the illustrator, graphic designer and art director for Stones Throw Records. Printed in red and black on a white shirt with *The Wire* url printed in red on the right sleeve. Limited edition of 100 shirts

Price (including postage and packing): £20 for UK, £22 elsewhere. Subscriber discount: £2 off per shirt

The Wire subscription gift

What better way to let someone know that you care than to give them a gift subscription to "the most essential music magazine of the contemporary era" (otherwise known as *The Wire*)?

For information on how to subscribe to *The Wire* go to thewire.co.uk/subscribe

Give...

When you give a gift subscription, we will send the lucky recipient notification inside a special *Wire* greeting card featuring exclusive artwork by the one and only Savage Pencil (see opposite). You can even ask us to include an inscription of your choice inside the card

... and receive

If you are already a subscriber to *The Wire*, whenever you buy a gift subscription for someone, we'll extend your own subscription by an extra two issues free.

To give the gift of *The Wire* call us on +44 (0)20 7422 5022 or go to thewire.co.uk/subscribe

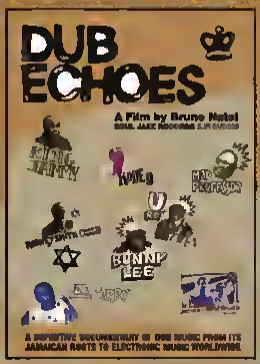
SUBWAY

SUBWAY II the debut album by **SUBWAY** on Soul Jazz Records, is a startling cosmic marriage of influences – German electronic rock music from the 1970s (Cluster, Kraftwerk, Neu, Harmonia, Ash Ra Tempel), 80s Detroit science fiction techno (Carl Craig, Juan Atkins, Jeff Mills) and a hint of Italian and European Disco (Danielle Baldelli meets Cerrone, Space, Moroder and Jean Michel Jarre).

With three previous sell-out singles on SOUL JAZZ RECORDS (Simplex, Satellites and 4410), an album 'Empty Head' (released in 2005) as well as a string of one-off projects, the group are currently name-checked by everyone from HOT CHIP to DFA, PRINZ THOMAS to CARL CRAIG with good reason.

RELEASED: 8th June 2009

SOUL JAZZ RECORDS SJR LP/CD 202

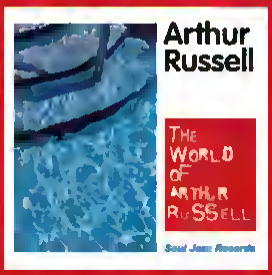


DUB ECHOES: TWO NEW CONSECUTIVE RELEASES ON DVD AND CD/3XLP

DUB ECHOES DVD is an amazing new film about Dub and its influence on the development of contemporary electronic music worldwide. Featuring an incredible array of artists – both Jamaican legends (U Roy, King Jammy, Lee Perry, Sly and Robbie, Bunny Lee, to name a few), alongside a similarly awe-inspiring array of artists who have taken Dub into new directions in electronic dance music in the 21st Century (Kode9, Roots Manuva, Howie B, Adrian Sherwood,) and many more.

DUB ECHOES double-CD/triple-LP is a lightning journey through Dub featuring Jamaican originators such as King Tubby, Lee Perry, Prince Jammy and Bunny Lee alongside electronic futurists and Dubstep artists such as Kode9, Harmonic 313 (Warp), IV (Hyperdub) as well as hip-hop pioneer Roots Manuva and original junglist Congo Natty. Musical world's collide as Francois Kervorkian meets Jamaican DJ legend U-Roy, and german techno giants Rhythm & Sound meet Cornell Campbell

BACK IN PRINT



THE WORLD OF ARTHUR RUSSELL
Seminal Compilation Of Arthur Russell's classic material. Including Dinosaur L and Loads More. Back In Print!
"Simply one of the best compilations of this or any year" **DJ**
"One of the great songwriters of the 20th Century." **THE WIRE**
"Arthur Russell fused the avant-garde with Disco and sounds like nothing else on earth" **THE GUARDIAN**

MIAMI SOUND CLASSIC AND RARE MIAMI FUNK & SOUL BACK IN PRINT!
"Soul Jazz Records latest curatorial masterpiece" **THE WIRE**
"Soul Jazz Records compilations are a virtual guarantee of great music" **THE OBSERVER**
"Just as they did in New Orleans, Soul Jazz have unearthed a funky treasure trove in Florida's vaults." **MOJO**
"Another smartly curated trawl through African-American treasures from Soul Jazz uncovers a host of classic funk and soul from Florida between 1968-74." **TIME OUT**

NEW 12" SINGLES

CLUEKID (FEAT. ARORAH)
South London premier dubstep producer Cluekid's debut on Soul Jazz Records. "Soul Vibe" is a massive old-skool tune already raved about on white label – featuring the soaring female vocals of Arorah, which gives this big tune a heavyweight soulful flashback to '95. Essential!
OUT NOW

MATIAS AGUAYO
Amazing, sublimely catchy new EP on Soul Jazz Records of glitchy deep techy, dubsteppy, dark electronic beats from celebrated international DJ and producer Matias Aguayo.
OUT NOW

SOUL JAZZ RECORDS

DISTRIBUTION: PIAS UK/SONY OADC WWW.SOULJAZZRECORDS.CO.UK WWW.SOUNDSOFTHEUNIVERSE.COM MORE INFO: INFO@SOUNDSOFTHEUNIVERSE.COM